

Stonehouse History Group Journal



Issue 9

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Front cover photograph - Sycamore tree on Maidenhill ©John Parker

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Editorial Team

Vicki Walker, Jim Dickson, Janet Hudson, Shirley Dicker

Why not become a member of our group?

We provide a programme of talks and events on a wide range of historical topics. We have a website and Facebook page and welcome contributions.

Annual membership £5 due in May.

Our Aims

- To promote interest in the local history of Stonehouse in all its aspects and through all periods of history.
- To hold talks and meetings devoted to this aim and to visit places of historic interest.
- To encourage members to work on research projects on local history.
- To cooperate with other societies and bodies having similar interests.
- To try to ensure that any material related to the history of Stonehouse is collected and preserved and made available for future use.

Do you have any interesting historical photographs of Stonehouse (from 1860 to today)?

We would like to scan them so that they can be added to our collection. Please contact us if you can help.

May we record your memories?

If you have memories of life in Stonehouse many years ago we would like to talk with you.

If you think you could help please phone Vicki Walker on (01453) 826 334

or email info@stonehousehistorygroup.org.uk

Visit our website

www.stonehousehistorygroup.org.uk

Issue 8 corrections

Stonehouse School 1832 – 1928. Early days, page 36, paragraph 3

John Elliot, who was also a surveyor, taught at the school from 1789, living at the house from 1832 until 1884.

This should read: John Elliot, who was also a surveyor, taught at the school from 1789, living at the house from 1832 until **1848**.

Stonehouse History Group Journal

Welcome to Issue 9

This issue has been delayed considerably by the coronavirus crisis, which has made it difficult for the editorial committee to meet. However we are pleased to welcome new contributors to our Journal.

John Parker was instrumental in helping to get our programme of Zoom talks off the ground with his excellent talk on Trees. He has contributed an article based on the presentation he gave via Zoom in September 2020. A recording of the talk can be accessed via our website. Thanks to the Arboricultural Association for the use of their Zoom subscription for four months.

Our new committee member, Linda Collazo, has written an article about the Kimmins family who were influential in Stonehouse in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Richard Lacey also gave a talk to our group and has written an account of his childhood at Stanley Mill which was a working mill at the time, but is now due to be converted into flats.

We are grateful to our long-term contributors for continuing with their research into the history of Stonehouse and making it available for others to read both in this Journal and on our website.

In 2020 we were sorry to lose one of our founder members, Myra Peters, who had suffered ill health for some time. Despite being in a wheelchair, Myra continued to attend and enjoy our meetings until they were cancelled due to the pandemic.

In January 2021 we also lost another member, local historian Philip Walmsley. Philip enjoyed attending our meetings with his son Alex and took great interest in the topics discussed. Philip recently donated the photos, slides and documents that were left by Stonehouse local history enthusiast Jack Anderson, which we were able to copy before depositing with Gloucestershire Archives. Alex has written a tribute to his father.

We would welcome new contributors to our Journal so if you would like to provide us with an article or a topic for further research, please contact us.

Editorial Team April 2021

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Myra Peters 1938-2020

by John Peters

Myra Burrows was born in Pewfall, Lancashire. Her mother, Edna, was a baker and her father, Harry, was an engineer who built steam locomotives. Myra and I met at college and married in 1963. Myra was a maths teacher and became the NUT rep at the biggest girls' school in London.

Myra frequently complained that there wasn't a history group in Stonehouse. One day, at a meeting of Stroud U3A, Jim Dickson asked a question of the speaker, adding something about there being no history group in Stonehouse. Myra turned to me and said, "We shall have to talk to him!" At tea time we spoke to Jim and arranged to meet in our house. We put up posters in Stonehouse and advertised in the newspaper - inviting people to a meeting in the Town Hall, which Jim booked for the occasion. We wrote to schools and other organisations. On the evening the hall was packed. The rest is history, or at least Stonehouse History Group. Vicki Walker volunteered to be Secretary, I was Chair and Myra, who was good at sums and had taught book-keeping, was Treasurer.

Myra welcomed members at the door and collected the subscriptions and fees. She was always a friendly and enthusiastic presence.

She was active in research and for a while led a project on people and jobs in Stonehouse in the first year of the twentieth century, but she was ill soon after, suffered an operation which didn't go well, and she had to resign from the committee.

In 2014, Myra had a stroke which left her physically incapacitated. She continued to attend meetings whenever possible. In April 2020 she cut her leg and I called an ambulance. The crew took her to A & E. I waved goodbye as she left; that was the last time I saw her. Unfortunately she was detained in hospital where she caught Covid-19. She died on 18th May 2020.



Myra pictured (left) with fellow committee member Kate Meyer at the SHG World War Two evening in 2009.

Philip Walmsley – local historian

by Alex Walmsley

My father, Philip Walmsley, passed away in January 2021. He was 95 years old and history had been one of his great passions for much of his life.

Dad was born in Boston, Lincolnshire in 1925. His interest in history started at an early age, bowling along the flat Lincolnshire roads on his bike to visit village churches and local monuments. He attended Boston Grammar School and remembered visiting Cologne on a school trip to Europe in 1938, finding the city extremely quiet and covered in swastikas.

Weekends during the war years saw him helping on local farms and participating in salvage drives with friends. At 16, he joined the Air Training Corps at school, before completing his A levels and going up to Oxford University for two terms. At 18, he was called up for War Service, joining the Royal Signals and being sent to India. He was stationed near Bombay and Lahore (later in Pakistan). He stayed until 1947, so saw first-hand many of the difficulties in the run up to partition.

Dad returned to Brasenose College, Oxford and completed an MA in History, followed by a year teacher training. His first teaching job was at Wycliffe College, Stonehouse, in 1951 and whilst living in the area he met and married pharmacist Jocelyn Willcox in 1953 at St Cyr's, Stonehouse. He became a local preacher for the Methodist Church the following year and, for over half a century, took services in churches in his local area.

Moving to Sutton Coldfield in 1955, Dad joined the history department at Bishop Vesey's Grammar School. He was to stay there for nearly 30 years, rising to become Head of History. He also became a Chief Examiner for A level British (Hanoverian) history. Several of Dad's students kept in touch with him for the remainder of his life and he was always delighted to hear of their progress over the years.

Mum's increasing ill-health forced him to take early retirement in 1984 and they moved back to Gloucestershire, settling in France Lynch. Dad joined Stroud Local History Society and completed a Postgraduate MLitt at Bristol University. He researched and wrote several books and booklets on the area, including *Towns and Villages of England: Stroud* (Alan Sutton, 1994), *The Railway comes to Stroud* (1995) and *Stroud versus Slavery* (2003). His later work included a two-part history of *The Church by Stroud Hospital – Holy Trinity* - the last part of which was published only four years ago. During this time, he nursed Mum for many years until she passed away in 2010.

Dad joined Stonehouse History Group in 2013. As old age restricted his other activities, it became an increasingly important part of his life. He particularly appreciated a seat being reserved for him in the front row at meetings, as he frequently mislaid his hearing aids and/or his spectacles immediately before meetings. He also appeared to be exceptionally lucky in the raffles!

Dad's final move was to a residential home in Leonard Stanley in 2018 and he continued to attend the Group until COVID forced temporary closure in early 2020. He was an academic throughout his life, and the last book we recall him reading with evident pleasure was a 900-page biography of Victorian PM Lord Salisbury.



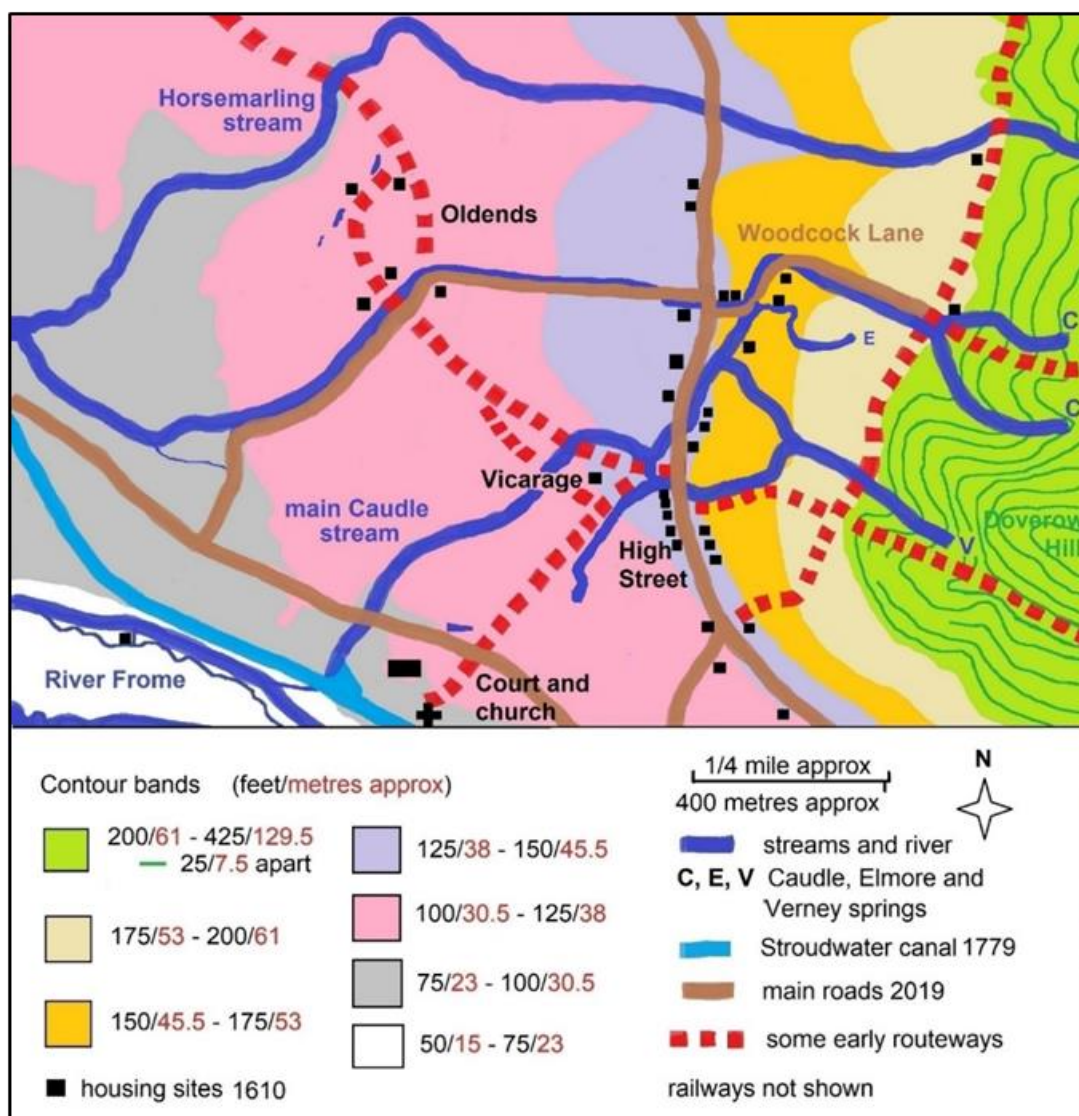
Alex and Philip Walmsley at home in 2015

A west side story: streams and settlement

by Janet Hudson

The lie of the land

The main sources of running water for Stonehouse village in medieval times were streams rising on the western side of Doverow Hill. The old parish reached east to Cainscross and north to Westrip, with other small streams also providing water, everywhere supplemented by ponds and wells. This article concentrates on the western streams and their contribution to the shape of the main village, now the town.



Map 1: Stonehouse village area in about 1610, showing relief.

Waterways deduced from documents: they may since have been culverted and/or modified.

The streams from the various springs interacted with early routes which took advantage of dryer ground. A main east/west route between the rivers Thames and Severn ran along a dry rise, where the vicarage formerly stood, then through Oldends and Nupend to Whitminster and Framilode. An ancient junction on it, with other roads and with the streams, is now marked by the Memorial Green. This became the heart of the future village. The manor house, Stonehouse Court, and the church, sat on another dry rise above the River Frome, with their own spring supply. The lower river valley, prone to floods, was used for water meadows and mills rather than for settlement. Local roads along the river valley gradually superseded the way through Oldends, later becoming the A419.

Manor and parish

The place called 'Stanhus' in the Domesday Book of 1086 probably consisted of scattered farms and hamlets. Like many other villages, Stonehouse may have had a more planned High Street by the 12th century. A medieval manor usually consisted of a home farm held directly by the lord, together with properties held by his tenants. Most of them had to provide some labour on the lord's land, called his 'demesne'. Oldends Lane follows streams round the northern edge of the main demesne land belonging to Stonehouse manor. Between the demesne land and the High Street lay the bulk of the 'glebe', the land which belonged to the parish church, centred on the old vicarage. Lord and vicar controlled the lower stretches of the spring-fed stream system. In the village there were wide roadside spaces, the 'lord's waste', later known as the Green, where he kept strict control to prevent building or misuse. Holders of land had to keep the spring-fed running streams open and clean. They also had to keep field ditches clear to allow drainage of unwanted water. Sewage management, for both humans and animals, was left to individuals, unless it caused a 'nuisance'. Orders were issued, and penalties were imposed, by the manor court (Manor).

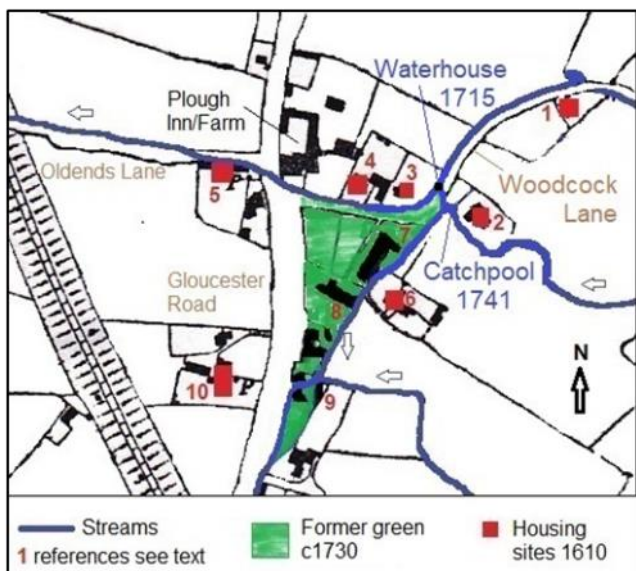
Woodcock Lane area

A lane down from Westrip followed the stream from the Caudle springs. The lord guarded the springs carefully. Both 'The Glen', and a house on the site of 9-11 Woodcock Lane [map 2 no.1], only appeared in the early 17th century. The stream then divided into two branches, one shaping Oldends Lane. The predecessor of the row of cottages at the top of this lane [map 2 no.5] is first mentioned in 1581. Some houses were established with their own wells, like the medieval freehold to the south [map 2 no.10], the site of Hill View House (Oldends).

The other, larger Caudle branch met the stream from the Elmore spring. At the top of the Green there were three medieval manor tenancies. In 1589 the manor court declared that *'use and custom hath been time out of mind'* that the *'watercourse running from Caudewell Well down the streate ought to keep his course down the same streate to serve the neighbours there for their necessary uses and not to be turned forthe of his course, and that the three tenements wherein Katherine Dangerfield [map 2 no.4, site of Huntley, Woodcock Lane], William Hill [map 2 no.3, site of 10-14 Woodcock Lane] and Johane Porter [map 2 no.2, site of Stream Cottage, 3 -7 Woodcock Lane] doe dwell ought to have some parte of the same water turned to their tenements at some tymes ...by a pasyge of the bignesse of a gimlett when water may conveniently be spared, and they oughte not to take any water there in any other sortt or maner att any other tymes'*. The Huntley property was divided in 1618, and its western barn and yard became Plough Farm.

Some people polluted the water with toilets, which were to be removed. There were other hazards. On 6th May 1712 Mary Vaisey, daughter of a broadweaver, Richard Vaisey, at map 2 no.3, was buried aged eighteen months, *'drowned in the stream before their door'* (Woodcock).

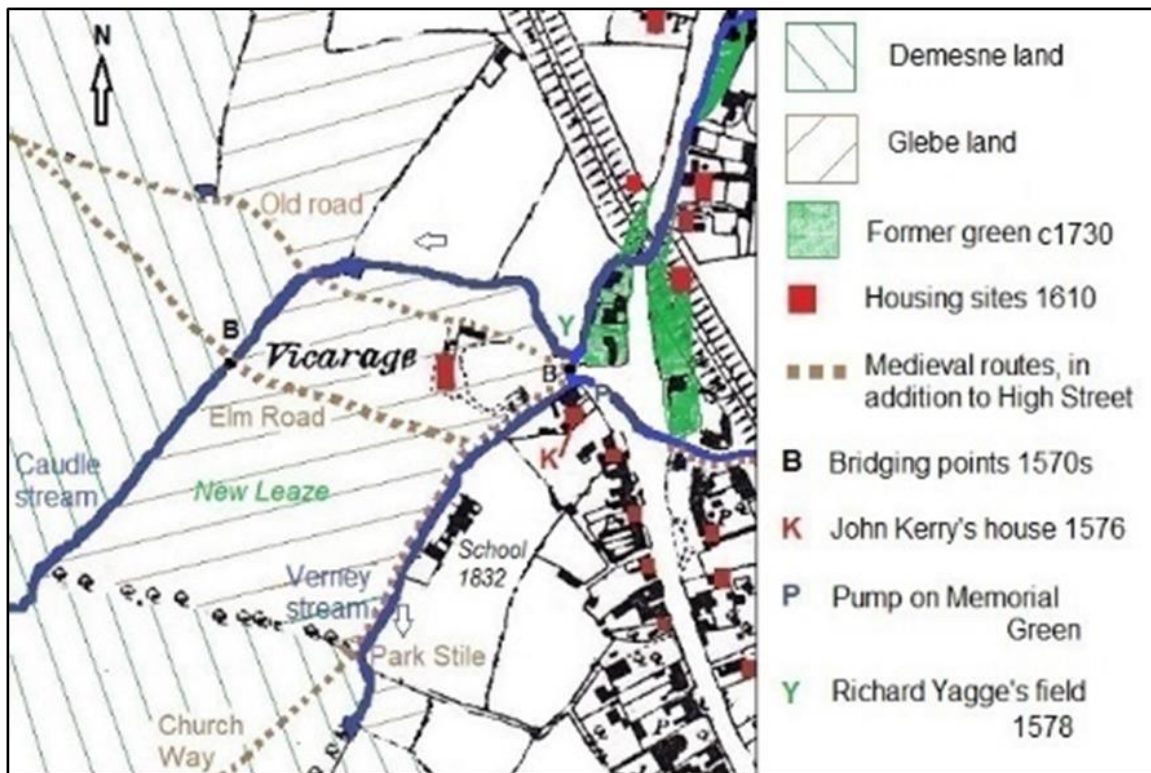
In 1715 the manor court ordered all concerned to clean the stream *'from Caudle to the waterhouse at the upper end of Stonehouse Green'*. The waterhouse seems to have been a storage facility provided by the lord of the manor. It was perhaps an early attempt to build up a head of water which would improve the flow. In 1741 there was a 'catchpool' on the other side of the lane where the Caudle and Elmore streams met. The water then served the manorial holding at Bede Cottage, 6 Greenstreet, before joining one of the branches of the Verney stream. The manor prevented any building on or around this part of the Green until the 18th century. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries the manor court issued general orders against obstruction or diversion of the water. They tried to control numbers of ducks and geese on the stream, and of livestock on the Green (Green 1).



Map 2: Woodcock Lane area, based on 1884 OS map, by kind permission of the Ordnance Survey

During the 18th century, the lords began to allow limited development of this part of the Green. In about 1720, Richard Evans lived in a new cottage at the junction of the Caudle and Verney streams [map 2 no.9]. This stood on the yard behind the former Brewers' Arms, 27 Gloucester Road [between map 2 nos.8 and 9]. William Clark leased part of the Green and built a house in the 1730s [map 2 no.7], the site of 1a-d Woodcock Lane and of 2 and 4 Greenstreet. This later developed into a row of dwellings used as parish poorhouses.

In 1764 Richard Denton bought a piece of the Green and built a house, the predecessor of the veterinary surgery, 17 Gloucester Road [in front of map 2 no.9]. In 1777 Joseph Meredith rented part of the Green and built a house [map 2 no.8]. John Denton, son of Richard, acquired and expanded this house in 1799. It became known as 'Solomon's Row', also used as poorhouses, the site of 29a and 29b Gloucester Road, and 1 Greenstreet. As map 2 shows, this housing pattern, with one or two later additions, still applied in 1884 (Green 2).



Map 3: Memorial Green area, based on 1884 OS map, by kind permission of the Ordnance Survey

Lower Gloucester Road and Memorial Green area

The upper Green narrowed down to the street because a medieval freehold house stood close by the stream, now represented by 5-7 The Square. In about 1600 the lord allowed a new cottage to be built next door, on the site of 1-2 Gloucester Road. Along from it was a house present in 1572, which was demolished to make way for the railway in 1845. Across the street from The Square was another medieval cottage, also destroyed for the railway embankment, which in the 16th century was home to the Yagge family. The stream ran by its field along the edge of the Green, on which no building was allowed until 1809 (Green 3).

At the end of Yagge's field the main Caudle stream turned around the dry rise on which the vicarage stood, to flow down to the River Frome. As it turned, it met the other arm of the Verney stream, coming across the Green from the lane next to what is now the Globe Inn. A simple bridge carried the former main road, here known as Vicarage Lane, over the channel joining the streams and into the vicar's grounds. He came to prefer his privacy, and diverted people along part of the ancient Church Way, which followed a small side branch of the Verney stream. The new way to Oldends then turned west, and in 1573 the manor court ordered the vicar to provide a new footbridge where it crossed the Caudle Stream, at the bottom of his field called New Close, or 'Leaze'. This path is now Elm Road. The small side stream ended at the top of the Berryfield, the water then draining down the slope. Wells under Wayfarers' Cottage and Fernleigh, 37 and 39 Regent Street, are still fed by ground water (Vicarage).

In the 1570s John Kerry was living in what is now Lion Villa, 68 High Street, which had been recently built on part of the land belonging to Orchard House. Orchard House itself was served by a well, like the other early houses along the High Street. John Kerry took full advantage of the running water. He was censured in 1575 and 1577 for putting too much livestock on the Green. His successors in their turn let go of land which developed into the cottages by the Memorial Green, starting in 1665 with the rear part of 72 High Street. The complexity of the streams junction at the Memorial Green led to different descriptions of the waterways, according to which sections needed attention. Sometimes general orders were issued about the stream from Caudle to the manor farm, sometimes from Caudle to the Park Stile, and sometimes from Lucas Gate, at the lane next to the Globe, to either the manor farm or the Park Stile. After 1682 these orders stop at the vicarage entrance. (Green 4).



*Gloucester Road c1900. The Square is to the right, out of sight.
The culverted stream runs down from the road bend. Gordon Terrace is in the distance.*

In 1741 the vicar had 'turned the water from its proper course near Thomas Cossam's' (72 High Street), and in 1750 landowners were to clean the stream 'from the waterhouse...to a well near the Rev. Mr Harris' Gate'. This pond, still recorded in 1810, probably acted as a public water reserve. In 1738 Thomas Croome, living on the site of 5-7 The Square, dammed the stream. In 1772 William Hyde had turned the water at the same place 'to a trough on the causey in the said street'. He was told to return it to its old course. By 1793 William Fryer, owner of the cottages next door, had the stream by his 'garden', now under the railway bridge (Turnings).

19th century and beyond

The parish population, about 620 in 1700, had doubled by 1801 and doubled again by 1841. There was some new housing by the 1820s, for example at the Square, on the Green near the Vicarage, and in Regent Street, but often existing sites simply became more crowded, with unpleasant effects on the water supply. In 1818 the manor court declared that 'the spring which rises in a field called Great Caudle... ought of right to serve the inhabitants with water...also...that part of the watercourse...which runs near the poorhouses in consequence of running behind and near the privy houses of other dwellings is rendered unwholesome'. People were relying less on direct dipping for water. In 1823 John Newman, a water carrier of Stonehouse, was married at Painswick, and in 1827 William Calway, blacksmith, was installing a water pump at the poorhouses. It may be at this time that the pump on the Memorial Green took the place of the pond by the vicarage gate (Pressure).

The Great Western Railway through the main village, opened in 1845, offered prospects of greater expansion. The Public Health Act of 1848 encouraged local authorities to improve water supply and drainage, although it did not compel action. In 1849 the parish vestry meeting investigated how to improve the water supply. It was said to be inadequate, especially for the poor, and no more wells or pumps could be recommended. Wells in the clay soil produced groundwater 'all more or less so impregnated with saline and earthy matter as to render it partially if not entirely unwholesome', and it was also often contaminated by cesspits in the same ground.

The Verney spring supply was regarded as insignificant, but the Caudle springs and the Horsemarling stream, together with stored rainwater, could *'abundantly supply the village'*, even if landowners might only spare half the water. Two improvement schemes were carefully outlined, and a committee was appointed. In 1850 Lord Sherborne offered funding for a reservoir and water from the Horsemarling stream. He had samples analysed by the Board of Health, including from *'the dipping place at the back of the Globe Inn'*, and the pump on the Green. However, despite real concerns about the threat of cholera, neither of the initiatives in 1849-50 produced any apparent result. In 1860, after *'an animated discussion'*, another committee was appointed to consider a better water supply, *'with due regard to private interests'*. Again, there was no result. Those householders who could do so installed storage cisterns to collect local spring or rainwater, with domestic pumps (Concern).

In 1874 the Stroud Union Rural Sanitary Authority proposed a district drainage plan, subject to the agreement of each parish. The Medical Officer of Health described the same situation in Stonehouse as in 1849, a deficient supply of water, and no system of drainage. After *'a full discussion...a reluctance having been evidenced by the meeting to the imposition of a rate'*, the vestry unanimously resolved to do nothing. They may have been waiting for an outcome in Parliament. The Public Health Act, passed in 1875, established local sanitary authorities with obligations to provide clean water and sewage disposal. No new housing was to be built without a mains water connection. The Stonehouse vestry may have hoped that the new authority would bear the capital costs of improvement, even if they would later be recouped by charges to the users. In 1883 the Local Government Board authorised a compulsory purchase of land next to Lower Mill for a sewage works, and a drainage scheme was completed in 1885. The Stroud Water Company had been formed in 1882, and it brought mains to Stonehouse in 1888. Sir William Marling, speaking in January 1894 at the opening of the Stonehouse Subscription Rooms, listed the new drainage and water supply as one of the features which might qualify Stonehouse as a town (Solution).

The prospect of a better supply encouraged new housing, such as Gordon Terrace, built c1889. Each domestic water supply provided one W.C., but not a bath, or water for laundry, livestock, gardens, or trades, all of which came with extra charges. A laundry place in the stream at the top of Oldends Lane, was only covered over in 1915. In 1922 there were many shared W.C.s, taps and baths throughout the village. The old streams, wells and pumps were still used for laundry and outside work. In 1941 a report on wartime emergency water arrangements, independent of the mains, still found springs, pumps, wells and open culverts in use here and there. Stonehouse village became a town in 1990. Modern utilities have allowed it to expand, but its shape is a legacy of its medieval water supply (Legacy).



74 High Street by the future Memorial Green c1898, with the pump still in use.

Sources of information

GA = Gloucestershire Archives, CB = manor court books

Concern: vestry minutes 1849-60, GA P316/VE2/1

Green 1: CB 1572-79, GA D4289/M1, 1599, 1608, 1613-15, GA D445/M7,
1676, 1681, GA D445/M5, 1715, GA D445/M9, 1741, D445/M10

Green 2: Evans, manor residence list 1720, GA D445/M9;

Clark, deeds 1739-51, GA D445/T13; Denton, deeds 1764-95, GA D1159;

Meredith, deeds 1777-99, GA DA35/150/14.

Green 3: CB 1572, GA D4289/M1; rental 1603, GA D445/M13; CB 1809, GA D445/M11.

Green 4: CB 1574-78, GA D4289/M1, 1599, 1608, 1613-15, GA D445/M7;
deed 1665, GA D177/III/12; CB 1682, GA D445/M5.

Legacy: Stroud Water Company charges 1904, GA C/AM/Z/1/2; Anderson, J.H.A., *The first ninety years: the story of Stonehouse Parish Council*, 1984, p.11; reports on water supply, 1922-23, GA P316a/PC/2/1, and 1941, GA P316a/PC/10/9.

Manor: survey 1558, GA D4289/M1; glebe terrier 1584, GA GDR V5/289T; deeds 1567-1784, GA D445/T12-15, 17-18; map and survey 1803-4, GA D1347 and P263/MI9; tithe map and apportionment 1839 (GA).

Oldends: will of Thomas Carpenter alias Gibbes, GA GDR 1581/108;

rental 1603, GA D445/M13; manor residence list 1632, GA D445/M8.

Pressure: CB 1818, GA D445/M11; marriage licence John Newman 1823, GA GDR/Q3/94; William Calway 1827 GA P316/OV2/1; Hudson, J., *Parish population reconstruction in Stonehouse*, Local Population Studies no. 77, Autumn 2006, p.30.

Solution: vestry minutes 1874, GA P316/VE2/1; Stroud Water Company 1882, Fielder, A., *Water supply in the parish of Painswick*, Painswick Chronicle no 20 (2018), p.39; order 1883 noted by J.H.A. Anderson, SHG collection; works 1885-88 noted in Loosley, S.G.H., *Wycliffe College, the first hundred years, 1882-1892*, Wycliffe, 1982, p.11; *Stroud Journal*, 5th January 1894.

Turnings: CB 1738, 1741, 1750, GA D445/M10, 1772, GA D517, 1793, 1810, GA D445/M11.

Vicarage: CB 1533, 1573, 1578, GA D4289/M1; glebe terrier 1584, GA GDR V5/289T.

Woodcock: CB 1589, GA D4289/M1; deed 1618, GA D149/T770;
parish registers 1711-12, GA P316.

The history and importance of trees in Stonehouse

by John Parker

Trees are all around us in Stonehouse, but they can be easy to ignore and few people take the time to consider the multitude of things that they do for our community. One of the most interesting social benefits is that trees operate on different timescales to humans, linking the past with the future. They are living history.

An example of this is the pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) at the junction of Midland Road and Severn Road in the Park Estate. The Park Oak is around 400 years old, making it the oldest living resident of Stonehouse. It was a sapling during the reign of James I (1603-1625) and might have been an acorn when Elizabeth I (1558-1603) was on the throne. It has witnessed changes on a scale unimaginable to humans and has stood strong through social upheaval, world wars, technological change and global pandemics. It has outlived them all.



The oak tree at Severn Road, Park Estate

In the fields around Stonehouse are several other trees, many of them oaks, of considerable size and age. These open-grown trees are of significant importance but are often not fully appreciated. An open-grown tree can simply be defined as one that has grown virtually all its life without competition from other trees. Towards Randwick Woods, not far from the remarkable tree collection at the former Standish hospital site, is as fine a specimen of sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) as one will find anywhere (*photo front cover*). The species is often considered a weed or demonised as being non-native, but this magnificent tree would impress anyone and has obvious value. We have many such open-grown trees locally, but how did they get there, and why are they so important now?

It is an oft-repeated statement that, in the distant past, Britain was an unbroken blanket of forest canopy; that a squirrel could travel from Lands End to John O'Groats, via Stonehouse, without touching the ground; and that humans started clearing this forest, carving out space for agriculture, towns, cities and eventually roads and railways, leaving nothing but remnants of ancient woodland and individual trees. This assumption has been challenged in recent years, most notably by Dutch ecologist Dr Frans Vera in his 2002 paper "*The Dynamic European Forest*". Vera proposes that large herbivores such as wild cattle in prehistoric times would have browsed the tops of seedlings and prevented the development of a continuous forest. Instead, the landscape would have been better described as woodland pasture – a combination of woodland, open-grown trees and open spaces, not unlike a park. It should be noted that this is an oversimplification and readers are encouraged to read the paper in its entirety.



An oak sapling protected by brambles on Verney Fields. The old oak is in the distance.

Many of the open-grown trees we find around Stonehouse will have been planted by birds such as jays, known to be capable of burying hundreds of acorns a year. The majority of these trees will, of course, perish in the early years of their development – most likely the victims of browsing animals such as deer. But others will have been planted in more sheltered places, hidden from the herbivores by a protective blanket of brambles which serve to shield the growing sapling until it is of a large enough size not to be at risk. This is the origin of a French saying which translates as "*the bramble is the cradle of the oak*". You can see plenty of examples of this on Verney Hill, where the next generation of veterans peek out from above their thorny beds.

To return to the Park Estate equipped with this knowledge, at first glance the ancient oak on the green might appear to be an example of a jay-planted open-grown tree. However, through a little landscape history detective work it can be seen that this is not the case, and that the true story is perhaps even more interesting. By overlaying maps of Stonehouse from the 1880s and today (using the *Know your place* online resource) it can be seen that the Park Oak was one of a cluster of five trees in what was once, as the name of the estate suggests, open parkland. By panning out further, the maps reveal that this cluster is part of a much larger group; the remains of a double line of trees running on a south-north axis, the southern end of which lines up exactly with the entrance to Stonehouse Court.



Map 1883-4 by permission of the OS



1883-4 map overlaid on 2019 map (KYP)

The Park Oak is in fact the last survivor of a lost avenue, around 1 km long, which once contained more than 200 trees extending northwards from Stonehouse Court as far as Oldends Lane. Stonehouse Court, as we see it today, was built in 1601 and with a stem circumference of 5 m this tree could quite easily have been planted at around that time,

more than 400 years ago. We will likely never know the species makeup of the whole avenue, but anecdotally it has been suggested that at least some of the trees were elms (*Ulmus sp.*). Was there anything at the end of the avenue to draw the eye through the trees, as was often the case in this classic landscape feature of stately homes?

This example demonstrates that there can be much more to trees than is immediately obvious and that, by their very nature, mature trees will have seen a substantial amount of history. Some of the finest specimens in Stonehouse, in the opinion of the author at least, are the pollarded London planes (*Platanus x acerifolia*) outside Stonehouse Park Infant School.

The London plane, as its name suggests, is well-suited to urban environments. With large, hairy leaves it is particularly adept at coping with the challenges of air pollution and one of the main identifying features of the species is its patchworked stems. This is caused by the bark which absorbs particulate matter and, once saturated, falls harmlessly to the ground in plates.

It seems likely that the Elm Road Planes (and their three counterparts, further to the south in the current playground) were planted at around the same time that the original school was built, in 1832.



Three London Plane trees by the school in Elm Road

How many generations of the Stonehouse community have played beneath the canopy of these trees and benefitted from their shelter? They are the oldest teachers in Stonehouse, standing guard over our children for almost 200 years and helping them in ways which might seem surprising – there is evidence to suggest that the presence of trees has a positive effect on the academic performance of children in primary schools. They also offer an important link to nature which is sometimes lacking in the modern world.

The disassociation between people and the natural world, which arguably began with the industrial revolution and continues apace today, and the loss of collective cultural memory about our shared environmental heritage is not purely of academic interest. The COVID-19 pandemic, still raging at the time of writing, gave many people a new appreciation of trees and green spaces. With restrictions placed on the movement of many Stonehouse residents for much of 2020 and 2021, the public green spaces of our town took on a new significance, particularly for those without a private garden.

Extensive research has proved that there is a strong link between access to green spaces and trees, and physical health and mental wellbeing. This access is often taken for granted, but the reality is that the rights we enjoy today had to be fought for by our ancestors, often through direct action. There are two stories in particular about Stonehouse which illustrate this. The first concerns Doverow Wood, and is recorded through a series of Stroud Journal articles from the time which were collated by C.N. Harrison.

In early 1862 the owner of Doverow Wood erected barriers to prevent the general public from accessing the area. The 19th century was a time of great radicalism in Europe. The 1832 Reform Act was fresh in the memory and one of the architects of that legislation, John Russell, 1st Earl Russell, was the Member of Parliament for Stroud from 1835 to 1841. Just a few years later, in 1867, the Second Reform Act would be passed, further expanding the franchise. The Revolutions of 1848 – also known as the Springtime of the Peoples – had swept across Europe affecting more than fifty countries. At the same time as the people were rising up and demanding more rights, the importance of public green space was becoming understood. The first public park in the UK is often said to be The Arboretum in Derby, opened in 1840 by mill owner Joseph Strutt. Whilst undoubtedly a philanthropic act, it was also increasingly recognised that there was a link between green space and human health – and healthy workers were more profitable than sick ones. In 1847 Birkenhead Park in Merseyside opened as the world's first publicly-funded park.

The closure of Doverow was not well received and, in March 1862 some local residents, headed by the Ebley Brass Band, walked to Doverow and tore down the obstructions. They passed through the woods and down through the fields to the Globe Inn, where the band played several times. The Stroud Journal reported that, *"we heard it is the intention of some persons to make 'another onset soon' to show that the Stonehouse people are awake to their 'public rights.'"* Others in the Stonehouse community were also engaged in the fight in their own way. Letters were written to the paper in support of public access to the woods, and a series of meetings were held. In April it was agreed that the Rev W. Farren White would take the woods on a lease of 30 years during which it would be open to the public. After extensive improvement work by the local people, Doverow Wood was formally opened on July 19th, 1862, with more than 200 local people sitting down to tea to celebrate.

After the lease was granted, the owner, Frederick Eycott, sold the wood to Johnson Frederick Hayward, who later sold it on to Martinus Peter Hayward and his daughters, Mary and Helen. In 1879 Doverow Wood was given by the Haywards to the Stroud Local Board of Health for the express purpose of being maintained as *"a place of resort and pleasure ground for the public."* In 1896 the land was sold for a token amount of five shillings to Stonehouse Parish Council and, in 1968, the Doverow Hill Trust was set up as a charity by Mrs Dorothy Farran, grand-daughter of Martinus Hayward. Doverow Woods is still managed in Trust by Stonehouse Town Council for the benefit of the people.



A Shady Walk, Doverow Hill

A second story involving access to public green space and tree planting in the 19th century, is described in full by local historian Jack Anderson. In 1898 some trees had been offered to the Parish Council for planting on the village green. A month later, solicitors acting for the Lord of the Manor, who had the rights to the land, objected to this tree planting, in response to which the people of Stonehouse conveyed their wishes to the Parish Council that it should, in Anderson's words, "*assert its rights to the control of the village greens and roadside wastes.*"

After the Council took control of the greens, a dispute arose which related to the ownership of the green in front of the Globe Inn. The owner of the Globe Inn objected to the Parish Council erecting a sign stating that permission must be obtained from the Council for any stall or vehicle to be placed on the green. He claimed that he owned the land in question and removed the Council's sign. The Council retaliated by removing the Globe signpost. The Parish Council wanted to ensure that the land was recognised as part of the village green and therefore belonged to the people of Stonehouse, and so took the case to court in Gloucester. The judge ruled in favour of the Council, preserving the green for the future.

An article from a local paper at the time reports on the festivities after the victory which, perhaps ironically, seemed to take place largely on the premises of the claimant – "*And didn't the Globe do a trade! My word!*" Interestingly, the author didn't seem too impressed with the case or the outcome, writing that "*somebody had got a sixpence a year out of Godsells [in exchange for allowing the pub sign to be located on the green], and it cost three or four hundred pounds to get it... It was called a victory, though nobody except the Parish Council can see it yet.*" A hundred years later Anderson certainly saw it as a victory, writing that "*it is probable that if the action had not been fought they [the people of Stonehouse] might well have lost their beautiful greens.*"



The Green with the Globe sign c1970s.

Next time you admire the village greens or stroll through Doverow Wood, remember that you can only do so because those who came before us were prepared to fight to protect our rights.



On the village green to the east of the Globe Inn stands one of the most iconic trees in Stonehouse – a willow (*Salix*) (photo left) which was planted in 1921. It has been pollarded many times over the last century and is full of cavities, with damage extending along the length of the stem. At the bottom can be found large fruiting bodies of giant elm bracket (*Rigidoporus ulmarius*), and at the top rusted metalwork can be seen on some of the branches, remnants of historic attempts to bolt the tree together to extend its life for a few more years. It is a fantastic tree, and it is hoped that the people of Stonehouse will be able to

celebrate its 100th birthday in 2021. And nestled within the canopy is an unexpected sight – a conker has made its way into the hollow at the base of the pollard points and has taken root. A young horse chestnut grows some four metres in the air, having never touched the ground.

New trees have been a theme of Stonehouse in the last few years, particularly with creation of the Stonehouse Community Arboretum project in late 2019. This is an attempt to turn the whole town into an arboretum – not the kind which hides behind a fence, accessible only through payment, but one which exists throughout the town and which is open and accessible to all. Every tree in every park, churchyard, school, pavement and garden, on public and private land, is considered part of the urban forest and should be regarded as part of the arboretum.

There are two elements to this work. Firstly, to protect and appreciate what we already have through inspections, appropriate maintenance and community engagement. The second part involves tree planting and aftercare. Stonehouse Town Council has worked with the local schools, community groups such as Stonehouse in Bloom and other stakeholders to select and plant a wide range of trees across Stonehouse, including some rather unusual species. We now have swamp cypresses (*Taxodium distichum*), wedding cake trees (*Cornus controversa*), handkerchief trees (*Davidia involucrate*), sweet gums (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), tulip trees (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) and many more. With help from local people, it is hoped that the Stonehouse Community Arboretum will be a feature of our town for decades and centuries to come.

One particularly special tree was planted in November 2020 on the village green outside the Medical Centre, formerly the Crown and Anchor Inn. This London plane was grown from a cutting taken from the famous Bishop's Plane in King's Ely School in Cambridgeshire. The Bishop's Plane is thought to have been planted in 1680, making it one of the first plane trees planted in the UK. Only around a dozen of these cuttings were produced, and the others have been planted in locations such as the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and the Sandringham Estate in Norfolk. In addition to being a special tree in its own right, the plane is also part of Progetto400, led by the University of Padua, Italy, which intends to monitor the development of trees over the centuries, from sapling through to ancient specimen. A cutting from a tree planted in 1680, introduced to the Stonehouse Community Arboretum in 2020 for a project which will be completed in 2420. The past, present and future – all in one tree.



John Parker plants the new plane tree.

In closing, we must return to the Park Oak and the story it tells us. It is the last survivor of an avenue which started at the entrance of Stonehouse Court, planted for the visual enjoyment of the Lord of the Manor. The avenue has long since gone, and so has the manor park and farm, covered by factories and houses. But at the point where the avenue would have ended we still have the Oldends Lane playing field where, in 2019, the first tree of the Stonehouse Community Arboretum – a tulip tree – was planted by local children with the Town Council. The Park Oak, the oldest living resident of Stonehouse, has its roots in our past and points the way to our future.

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Stanley Mill - A working and living community

by Richard Lacey

In 2018 I gave an illustrated talk to Stonehouse History Group describing life at Stanley Mill during the 1950s and 60s. Recalling my memories drew a sharp contrast between the slower pace of life in my youth compared to the busy rush of today.

Recently, walking through the unusually quiet streets of “lockdown” Stonehouse brought back those memories of a childhood when traffic was regarded as an event rather than a curse. In the 1950s, Ryeford obstructions, such as Stanley Mill’s maintenance manager’s dog sleeping in the middle of the road, were accepted and carefully avoided. Buses regularly stopped outside the Mill and were well used, since most families did not have a motor car. At the end of the twentieth century, however, more than 600 vehicles were passing each hour and there was a distinct lack of buses.

The Lacey family, consisting of my father Alfred and mother Sylvia, my brother Steve and me, Richard, came to Ryeford in June 1953 (the week after the Queen’s Coronation). We moved from Trowbridge

so that my father could take up the post of Assistant Company Secretary to Albert Tanner who was shortly to retire. My mother went to work for Willcox the Chemists in Stonehouse High Street and later Bailey’s the Opticians. The Mill had around 250 employees at that time, manufacturing top of the range cloth for both the domestic and international markets and many of the workforce lived locally. In those days Stanley Mill was at the heart of its own community and accepted responsibility for the welfare of its workforce. In return loyalty was given and it was not unusual for my father, as Company Secretary, to be given the task of purchasing a suitable gift to mark forty or more years service. In retirement, deserving former employees or surviving dependants could also receive Christmas hampers.



Stanley Mill c1950s



Clerical and managerial staff at Stanley Mill in 1941

We were housed in the old manager's red brick house, called The Limes because of the series of lime trees that ran the length of the garden, directly adjacent to the Weaving Shed. Between us and the Mill Yard was the Gatehouse occupied by the French family comprising Jack, Dolly and their son Keith, who I grew up with.

Jack and Dolly were wonderful characters and not only was their house never locked, as keys for the Mill buildings were collected from there, they would expect you just to wander in at any time and be made welcome. Jack worked in the Engineering Shop and the Mill Club and Dolly was also an employee. It seemed to me at the time that they were always busy. My abiding memory of them was Jack in his flat cap and Dolly in permanent pinny, buying elvers from the converted army lorry which toured the area with a large tank and cooking them as a special treat for Jack.

We kept pigeons and chickens and they had bantam hens so at any time of day when the looms were not working the garden was still full of noise from the birds! Rather than being disturbed by the noise of the looms from the Weaving Shed I was comforted by it, as quite a lot of my early life was spent in bed with asthma and the looms were the timekeepers next to my bedroom. The day started at 7 am, morning break for Workers' Playtime, lunch time, clocking off at 4:30pm and night shift at 7pm. In the school holidays I was occasionally allowed to work in the Mill with Gilbert Hughes, a King's Stanley man, on the machine that dried the washed cloth. The smell was wonderful to me and seemed to help my breathing and I can still recall it, together with the near deafening sound of the nearby looms and belt conveyors overhead.



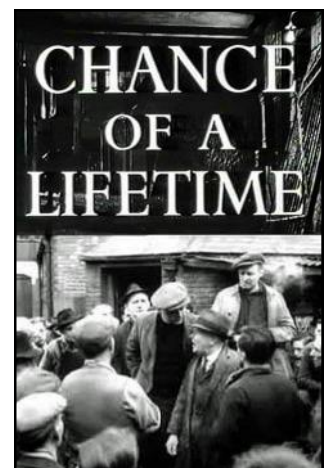
The interior of Stanley Mill ©Peckham's Photos

The main mill building, construction of which began in 1812, was, and still remains, a very important early example of a structure with stone floors which enabled manufacturing to be carried out on all levels. It was one of the first genuinely fire-proof mills in the country, built of brick around a framework of iron arches. Fire was a great hazard in cloth mills, due to oil soaking into the wooden floors, and fluff from the cloth.

Such was the strength and suitability of the structure that the Mill was commandeered in 1941 during WW2, I understand to house submarine batteries and other essential wartime supplies. An indication of the level of pride in the workforce is illustrated by the fact that, shortly before the building was taken over, a series of photographs of the different departments was commissioned of which

three are illustrated here. You will note the absence of younger men who were, presumably, occupied elsewhere in defence of their country.

The Mill was used in 1950 as one of the settings for the feature film "Chance of a Lifetime", starring such matinee idols as Kenneth More, Bernard Miles, Patrick Troughton and Hattie Jacques. Some of the Mill employees were extras in the film and Jack Marshall, one of the Directors, was mentioned in the dialogue. The film was controversial and both Rank and Associated Pictures refused to screen it, claiming it was too political and would annoy employers. However the Chairman of the Board of Trade, Harold Wilson, argued in Cabinet for it to be released and it duly was, but it did not turn out to be a great success. The theme of management/worker unrest was of course no reflection on Marling & Evans Ltd, the owners of Stanley Mill. I can only ever remember one instance of discord amongst the workforce whilst growing up, which involved a new employee who "encouraged" a brief standoff with management which was quickly sorted out by the local union representative Bill Maddocks. Bill was a well known Leonard Stanley resident who entered local politics and later stood, without success, as a Labour candidate for the Parliamentary Constituency of Stroud.





Engineering and other maintenance workers in 1941



Female workers in 1941

Most of Ryeford at that time was owned by Marling & Evans, from the house known as Noah's Ark (set down below road level next to the electricity sub-station) to the narrow bridge over the road leading to King's Stanley. In the 1950s there were two rows of terraced cottages next to the narrow roadbridge, of which only one survives, cottages at the bottom of the Mill Yard and further cottages beyond that. In addition there were The Limes and Stanley Cottage next door and a large allotment available area for Mill employees. There was even a wooden shop run by a lady called Mrs Holdey.

As a boy growing up in Ryeford it was like living in your own Adventure Park. Ryeford is more or less on an island with the River Frome splitting in Ebley and joining again at Bridgend leaving the Ryeford Community in the middle. Add to that the canal, a two acre mill pond full of fish, a railway line (which closed to passengers in 1947 but continued with a goods service until 1966 before the Dr Beeching axe), a saw mills and mill buildings largely unoccupied at weekends and you had in the 1950s and 60s a perfect playground! Brunsdon's Haulage yard next to the Mill Pond was tempting but never an option due to its close proximity to home.



The Mill Pond c1960s

Being introduced at an early age to angling by my father, despite his lack of enthusiasm for the sport, I quickly fell in love with it and spent my childhood fishing the Mill Pond and surrounding waterways. The Mill Pond was something of a hidden gem as it was not visible either from the road or pavement. It was sheltered from the public gaze by hedges and trees and elevated 15 feet or so above the level of the road in places. It was fed by a small inlet from the River Frome and a slight current took the water around the perimeter to ornate iron sluice gates back into the River with an overflow drain, if required, running under the Mill. This was well stocked with various breeds of fish, many of which are now rarely seen, such as gudgeon, dace and eels. Marling & Evans had their own fishing club with permits made available to staff and families. This was "policed" by Ernie Craddock, a King's Stanley man, who took his duties very seriously and you always had to carry your permit or be told to leave. (Even though these were issued annually and he had probably already checked them many times before!) Fishing season ran from 16th June to 15th March and there were no exceptions, unlike many waterways today. Living opposite the Pond we could hear the carp "barking" as they cruised the surface until 15th June when they disappeared for the season. Anglers would arrive at midnight on 15th June to ensure a spot and we were among them until school started. This was also usually the time that the Fair came to the area (in the field where Horsetrough Roundabout is now) so emotions were torn in teenage years between the lure of the fish and the chance to become nauseous on the Waltzer!

In the winter of 1962/3 the Mill Pond became popular for another reason, as a hard winter froze the surface for several weeks and ice skating came to Ryeford. My football boots became skates thanks to clip-on blades and we learned to skate. Word spread and the Pond became more



The Mill Pond frozen in winter 1962/3

crowded by the day and included some Wycliffe students who, we assumed, had been given the green light to come. Previous to this the only contact we had had with the Wycliffe boarders was as we watched them file past in their grey uniform and red caps (hence our nickname for them as the "matchsticks") on their way to King's Stanley Church on Sunday mornings. They proved to be very amenable to snowball fights on the Pond and we learned a valuable lesson on how to judge on acquaintance and not hearsay! Needless to say I was the first one to find out when the ice was no longer strong enough to bear weight.

Marling & Evans had their own cricket team and the most important fixture of the year was the visit to Clarke's at Trowbridge which had a connection with M & E. Whole families travelled there to the day-long match and I can still picture the catering delights. For our own part cricket was played nightly in the Mill Yard. Matches started after the day shift had finished and Management had gone home and should have finished when the night shift started, but invariably this was when the light faded as they were more relaxed about our presence. It was then that I first encountered the Indian community. At 7pm the night shift arrived having been bussed in from Gloucester (M & E used to bring in workers for night shifts from various areas I understand). When we first met them they came in on time for the shift but gradually this became earlier as they liked to sit on the benches outside the Weaving Shed to watch the game and even to join in at times. Implied acceptance of our out-of-hours occupation of the Yard came unexpectedly one day in the form of a set of cricket stumps painted on the wall of one of the buildings.



The rear of Stanley Mill showing the engineering workshop with Club and Billiard Room on top two floors.

Outside of our cricket "season" with the dark nights preventing play, some of us ventured inside the Mill buildings which was definitely supposed to be off limits. The lure of the bale store was too great with the chance to bounce on and hide behind the huge bales of cloth awaiting processing. I have to say, in my defence, that these were very robust and unlikely to be damaged by our presence. Possible detection came in the form of Edgar Barrett who lived in one of the cottages within the Mill Yard. His stock phrase was, "*I know you are in there*" and we wondered if he also used this when we weren't even there.

The highlight of the Stanley Mill year came in the form of the Christmas Party to which all the children of the workforce and management were invited. We had tea in the canteen with the obligatory sandwiches and jelly before we scampered off to the Mill Club which was located up a flight of wooden stairs above the Engineering Shop. One more flight would take you to the billiard table which in later years we would play on after the local league finished - until the roof started to leak and the pigeons took roost above the table with the resultant deposits! Our route to the Club from the canteen on these occasions was not straightforward as we had to climb three flights of concrete stairways from the canteen, run the length of the building and down three flights to the short walk across an open area and then up the wooden stairs to the Club. How much easier it would have been to leave the canteen and make the 200 yards walk to the Club, but then we would have had to pass the boiler room with the screw mechanism to take in the coal and one or two of us might have been lost on the way!

I feel very privileged to have grown up in the 1950s and 1960s within the "Ryeford and Marling & Evans Community". We made our own entertainment and were not distracted by the "must haves" and pressures on today's young people.

Photographs from Richard Lacey's collection.

*Ryeford Road leading to Stanley Mill
c1950s*



Fromebridge Mill and the Fromebridge Company

by Stephen Mills

Fromebridge Mill is now a thriving inn and restaurant situated on the River Frome close to Junction 13 of the M5. It has a long and fascinating history, one of conversion, rebuilding, decay, and yet further adaptation and re-use. Like so many other mill sites in and around the Stroud valleys, it has been adapted countless times. Over the centuries it has hosted numerous trades and industries, some of which are still reflected in its bricks and mortar.

The story begins

The documented story of Fromebridge Mill really begins with the Domesday survey of 1086, when it was recorded as having the relatively high value of 10 shillings (50p) (1). Like all other water mills at the time, it was a corn mill. It was probably a small,

simple affair built largely of stone, wood and perhaps thatch. However, this was to be just one of a succession of buildings to occupy the site over the next 900 plus years.



Fromebridge Mill 2013

Changing ownership and use

From the latter part of the 12th century, the mill was owned by Godstow Abbey (a few miles from Oxford) and leased out to a succession of tenants (2). It was to remain in the Abbey's hands for many years. In fact, the Abbey was still receiving its annual rent from the mill well into the 16th century.

Along with changes of tenancy came changes of use. Water mills such as Fromebridge were important in that, apart from muscle power, they were the only reliable source of mechanical power available. Gradually, apart from grinding cereals, water power came to be harnessed in other ways, and was adapted to drive the machinery for a host of new industries.

The successive changes of occupier and use were to be a constant feature throughout much of the mill's long history. For example, by 1328, it was being operated by Roger le Walker (3). The surname 'Walker' suggests that the lessee may have been using the mill for fulling (the process of cleaning and thickening the cloth), otherwise known as 'walking'. By now, water power had been adapted to operate fulling stocks, an important component in the chain of woollen cloth production. After several centuries of operating exclusively as a corn mill, the mill may have become part of the expanding woollen cloth industry that was developing in the Stroud valleys.

The Stroud area offered a number of attractions for the cloth trade - water to drive mills was available in abundance, and there was freedom from the restrictive practices of the urban-based Craft Guilds in cities such as Gloucester. Increasingly, this encouraged cloth makers to relocate from traditional urban centres of manufacture to rural areas, more receptive to unrestricted industrial expansion. So it seems that Fromebridge, as an already established centre of water power, had probably been drawn into the often-profitable trade of fulling woollen cloth. By the mid -15th century, it was definitely active in the cloth trade, as in 1450, the mill was recorded as comprising a combination of two fulling mills plus a corn mill (4). It is likely that each activity was powered by its own dedicated water wheel, but all located under the same roof. As the years passed, changes of use continued. At the beginning of the 16th century, the mill was being leased by Hugh Weaver - by now it comprised a corn mill, malt mill, and fulling mill housing two sets of fulling stocks.

New lessees continued to appear; for example, the mill was occupied successively by members of the Bowser, Haynes and Halling families. The configuration of the mill also evolved, as in 1609, it was recorded as comprising two corn mills and two fulling mills belonging to the lord of the manor (5). However, by 1632, the fulling mills had gone, replaced by three corn mills – these were sold by John Arundell to Urian Wise (6). In 1713, the mills (by then four corn mills) were sold to Stephen Jenner (7).

The arrival of the Fromebridge Company

Fromebridge remained solely a corn mill until 1760, although its time as a producer of foodstuffs was coming to an end and a new 'industrial' dawn was fast approaching. In that year, the corn mills were sold to Joseph Faithorne, who was described as a brazier or one who works in brass, and his business partners, William and John Purnell. Their arrival ushered in a new era for the mill, one that would ultimately see it achieve national importance.

The newly-formed 'Fromebridge Company' set up yet another new activity at the mill, creating a substantial wire and iron works. The seeds of the new company had been sown in 1759, through a partnership agreement drawn up between Joseph Faithorne, John Purnell and Thomas Smith (8). By 1760-61, Faithorne and the Purnells had each brought £700 in goods or money into the business. The latter had accumulated their wealth through involvement in the woollen trade, running iron and wire works, and owning mills, land and property as far away as the Forest of Dean.

The Fromebridge Company was progressive and innovative, with an eye firmly on developing new markets for their products. For example, in 1766, the Crown granted John Purnell a patent for the manufacture of ships' bolts and round iron and steel rods – it also encompassed improvements in the manufacture of iron and steel wire (9). In essence, the wire drawing process used revolving cylinders to pull metal rods through a series of tapered dies, progressively thinning them into wire. At Fromebridge, water power was used to drive this stage of manufacture. It was for the production of wire made from various metals that the company became widely recognised. By the mid-1770s, the works was now one of the most important wire works in the country. In 1779, the Gloucestershire historian Samuel Rudder described them as:

“one of the largest and most compleat works in the kingdom for making iron and steel wire” (10).

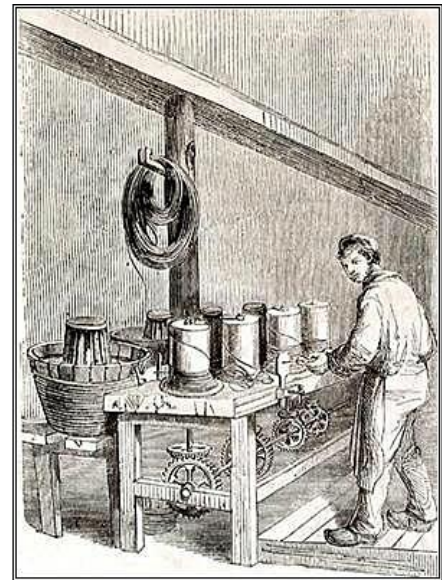
In 1790, William Purnell and Joseph Faithorne assigned (transferred legal rights of) an insurance policy for £1500 with the Sun Fire Office relating to the mill to John Hicks of Berkeley (11). The policy gives a useful description of the site which now consisted of:

“a rolling mill, tilting mill and block mill, all under one roof, with wire mill and offices adjoining and a brass nealing house”.

A block mill or block furnace was a bloomery, where ingots or bars of puddled iron were brought into the form of thick bars, then left for further rolling, etc. when required. A nealing house (annealing) was where metals were toughened by exposure to continuous and diminishing heat. The rolling mill was used to manufacture sheets of iron, and the tilting mill (employing a tilt hammer) was used to produce thinner sections of iron, suitable for making items such as knives. All processes were said to be still under one roof (12). The company was also making brass wire, the raw materials probably coming from the Bristol Brass Company (13).

An important market for wire was the expanding local cloth industry, where it was initially used extensively in hand cards for teasing out woollen fibres, but latterly for the circular wire-studded drums of mechanical carding engines. The Purnells already had experience with this type of application (14). The Fromebridge Company was regarded widely as a provider of good quality wire. When ordered from other suppliers, it was often specified that wire was to be made to *“the Fromebridge Standard”*.

Another major market was the manufacture of fish hooks, supplying parts of the trans-Atlantic fishing industry, primarily that centred in the waters off the coast of Newfoundland, Canada. In coastal towns such as Gloucester, Massachusetts, many fishermen sailed north to the Newfoundland fishery, a prime location for cod. Millions of hooks made from Fromebridge wire must have been used, this simple contrivance helping to provide a living for thousands of people.



*Wire drawing
(Magasin Pittoresque 1860)*

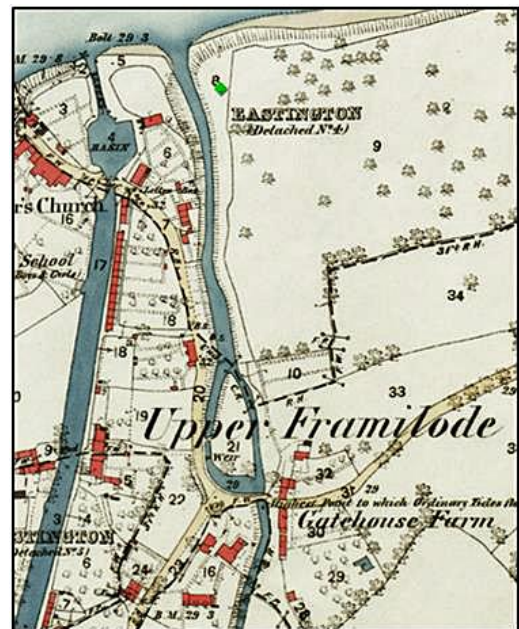
Troubled times

The Fromebridge Company prospered and by 1778, was valued at no less than £21,000 (15). Alongside the manufacture of steel, copper and brass wire, the works was also producing pig and bar iron. The mill was sometimes referred to simply as an iron mill (16). The company continued to expand. When the ironmaster George Wilding died, his iron-slitting and tinsplate mills downstream at Upper Framilode were quickly gobbled up, becoming part of the Fromebridge Company's little empire.

Changes continued to take place within the company and in 1791, after being involved for more than 30 years, Joseph Faithorne withdrew and released his interest in the works to William Purnell. A few years later, in 1800, Purnell entered into a partnership with William Veel (17); however, the end of the Fromebridge Company was in sight. In 1805, Purnell died. The mill continued to produce iron and brass wire for a time, although by 1809, Veel found himself in financial trouble and unable to pay his debts. Manufacture of wire may have ended around this time (18) – no further references have come to light.

In 1821 and 1822, both Fromebridge and Framilode Mills were offered for sale. Fromebridge was described as *“an old-established brass, copper, and tin plate works, comprising commodious mills, work-shops, and buildings, for many years used with great repute in the manufacturing of brass and steel, copper, and brass wire, with a good dwelling-house, and offices adjoining”*. Even though Purnell was now dead, both mills were advertised as being occupied by Messrs. Purnell, Veel, and Co. and were offered for sale or rent, either together or separately (19, 20, 21). Sales particulars also referred to the manufacture of edge tools at both mills (12). In 1839, Framilode Iron Works was in the ownership of, and occupied by, the oddly-named Purnell Bransby Purnell Esquire (21). However, by 1841, the site was described as derelict. It is not clear what was happening at Fromebridge at the time.

There now follows a period in Fromebridge Mill's history where events become a little hazy and precisely what was being produced is unclear. However, there are hints that industrial activity continued. Particularly during the 1830s, parts of the local woollen industry were in a bad way, especially hand loom weavers who saw their jobs being replaced by faster more efficient power looms. Many were 'in distress' and on strike. In 1839, a report by the Assistant Commissioners investigated various aspects of the trade and, usefully, this provided a list of donations given to the striking weavers' union from various mills and workers' communities (23). The amounts donated help to give some idea of the scale of the activity taking place. For instance, some of the larger cloth mills made substantial donations: 'Ebley Mill and Friends' donated £17/12s/6d and Lodgemore Mill £9/8s/11d - not inconsiderable sums. The surprise is that Fromebridge Mill was recorded as donating £6/6s/10d, quite a large amount and one that suggests that there was still a sizeable workforce at the mill. Thus, it seems likely that an industrial scale workforce of some sort was present. At the time, Framilode Iron Works was still owned by Purnell Bransby Purnell, so perhaps Fromebridge had remained in the same hands and was still in operation? What seems likely is that things must have come to an end soon after as there are no further references to industrial activity at the site.



Framilode Mills in 1884 - located on the island (marked 21)

Back to its roots

After this period, the mill stood idle for some time. However, by the 1850s, at least part of it had reverted to its first use, corn milling. In 1859, Fromebridge was now the corn mill of Uriah Godsell of Frampton (23), although his milling activities appear to have been limited predominantly to the block at the southern end of the mill's main range. He was recorded as the miller from 1859 through to 1879, although by the latter date, the business was apparently in decay and the mill in a very run down condition.

For some of the 19th century, other parts of the mill were turned over to a very different use. Anyone familiar with the mill will know the tall 19th century central block, packed with windows. This clearly had no function as part of a corn mill and its configuration suggests an association with some form of textile manufacture - indeed, various textile workers were living and working at Fromebridge, presumably alongside Godsell's corn mill. In 1836, the Poor Rates noted the presence of a weavers' shop at Fromebridge, although they give no indication of its scale or of what was being produced. However, in 1842, occupations included woollen weavers and woollen cloth workers. A decade later, handloom weavers, cloth workers, and elastic spinners are mentioned. Textile-related entries continue to the 1880s, including a reference to the Foreman of the 'cloth factory'.

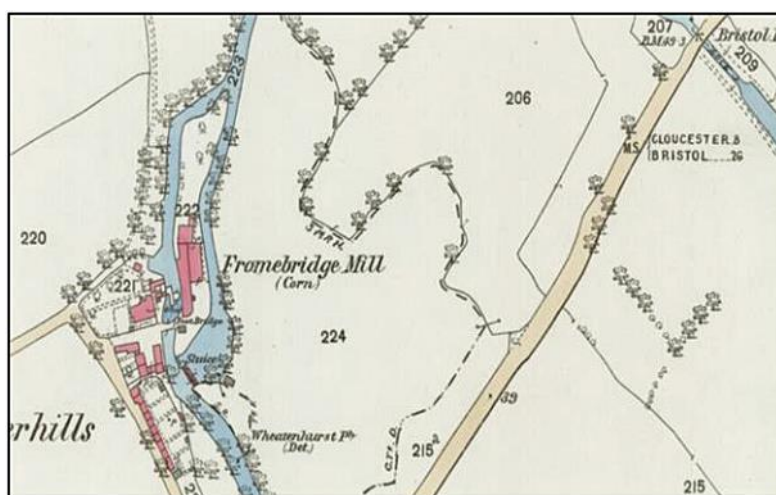
What is particularly intriguing is the mention of elastic winders, strongly suggesting a link with the major Eastington woollen cloth manufacturer, Charles Hooper. At one time, he ran all three of the village cloth mills, along with Beard's Mill in Leonard Stanley and Bond's Mill in Stonehouse, concentrating mainly on the production of high quality broadcloth. However, Hooper was not adverse to trying out new ideas, one of which was the successful development of an elasticated woollen material for which the company became well known - initially, this was used mainly for making gloves. It was so innovative that Hooper was awarded a prize medal in the 'Woollen and Worsted' section of the Great Exhibition of 1851 (25). It was noted that:

"Only two novelties had been produced in the preceding decade, one of which was the newly-developed elastic gloving cloth developed by Charles Hooper".

The material became known widely as "*Hooper's Lustres*" and its use spread to the manufacture of trousers and greatcoats. Production continued for many years and the cloth was exhibited at major events such as the International Exhibition held in Paris in 1878. The presence of elastic winders at Fromebridge suggests that at least one section of the mill formed a component of Hooper's company and that it was being used for the production of this novel material. Parallel to the mill race, a large iron drive shaft survives - this was originally driven by the water wheels and carried power into the central block, where it presumably powered cloth-making machinery. It is not clear when cloth production ended at Fromebridge, but by the 1860s, Hooper's company was being restructured, eventually gravitating to Bond's Mill alone.

By 1889, Fromebridge's corn mill had been taken over by Charles White, and gradually brought back to life (26). Thanks to his carpentry and other skills, the mill was eventually put back into operational condition. He began to grind small amounts of corn and soon found himself processing cereals in bulk from local farms.

The business prospered partly because of the lack of competition in the area. At some point, the mill was enlarged and comprehensively re-equipped by the Gloucester-based firm of William Gardner & Sons, "*millwrights, millstone manufacturers and engineers*". Power to drive the millstones and other equipment was provided by two water wheels although output was subsequently boosted post-1889 by the installation of additional steam-driven milling equipment supplied by renowned engineering company Fielding & Platt of Gloucester.



Fromebridge Mill layout, 1884

During the latter part of the 19th and well into the 20th century, at a time when many smaller country mills were closing, Fromebridge settled down to a steady trade as a corn mill of some local importance. Other surviving mills gradually switched to the production of animal feeds for the farming community, a route eventually taken at Fromebridge. The mill came to have a reputation for some of the finest rolled oats in Gloucestershire.

Cider making

For many years, alongside corn and animal feed milling, Fromebridge also produced cider, mostly for consumption on local farms and within agricultural communities. Much of the mill's cider-making equipment had been manufactured locally, coming from Workman & Sons, in nearby Slimbridge where, at various times, the company also undertook iron founding and general engineering work. However, with manufacture starting around 1861, they were best known for their award-winning cider-making equipment that included different types of cider mills, presses and pumps. Charles White was delighted with the combined cider mill and steam press supplied, noting that:

"Last season we made 260 gallons of cider in an hour with it, the fruit being perfectly ground, and the pulp pressed thoroughly dry". (27)

One of the mill's longest serving employees was Basil Gymer. He worked there for no less than 50 years and recalled that, at times, he and Stanley White had produced up to 1000 gallons of cider in a single day. Prior to the Second World War, cider was made for farmers at a charge of three-ha'pence (1½ old pence) a gallon. After the war, prices increased to 4d a gallon. Basil recalled that:

"We always had a cider house at the mill and anyone calling was invited to drink as much as he liked".(28)

Final days

The mill was to remain in the hands of the White family until its eventual closure around 1990. However, initially, it must have been on a leased basis as it was not until the Bengough Estate was broken up and sold in 1927 that the mill finally became the family's property. The vendor was Nigel James Bengough of Tocknells House, Painswick, who was described as *"late a captain in His Majesty's Royal Flying Corps"*. When the auction took place on October 7th 1927, the Fromebridge site formed a single lot that was sold to Charles White, the auction being held nearby at the Whitminster Hotel (29). Charles White was subsequently followed in the business by his son Geoffrey and, later, his grandson Stanley.

When commercial activities at Fromebridge came to an end, it brought to a close perhaps a millennium of milling and industrial uses. There followed several years of uncertainty and a number of proposals for different conversions. It was eventually decided that the mill would be converted to an inn and restaurant, and this opened at Easter 1999. Understandably, much of the interior was remodelled and some of the equipment removed. However, a significant amount was retained *in situ*. Some of this, particularly on the ground floor, is now on display, a testament to the mill's long and fascinating history.



Stanley White with Eastington farmer, Owen Harris, outside Fromebridge Mill, 1970s

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Abbreviations

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GA: Gloucestershire Archives

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Maps

Maps of Framilode and Fromebridge mills reproduced from 1884 OS map with the kind permission of the Ordnance Survey.

- 1 Ellis, Sir Henry ed., *Domesday Book*, Record Commission, 1811-16, volume 1 f168v
- 2 VCH p.150
- 3 GA D149/T171
- 4 GA D149/T172
- 5 GA Glos. Collection 16256 (46)
- 6 GA D149/T175
- 7 GA Glos. Collection deeds 137.87. Thomas Jenner President Magdalen College, Oxford
- 8 Chatwin, pp.7-11: detail of John Purnell and developments at Fromebridge
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- 10 Rudder, S., *A New History of Gloucestershire 1779*, Herbert, N.M. ed, Stroud 1986, p.452
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- 19 GA Glos. Collection deeds 137 pp.119-120.
- 20 *The Cambrian*, 5th May 1821. National Library of Wales
- 21 GA *Gloucester Journal*, 21st Jan 1822
- 22 Purnell Bransby (Cooper) Purnell (1791). He was married to Anne Charlotte Clifford, 3rd daughter of Nathaniel Clifford, Esq (formerly Winchcombe) of Frampton Court. He lived at Stancombe Park, Dursley. <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Cooper-3876> Accessed March 2021
- 23 Miles, W.A., *Reports from the Assistant Commissioners, Gloucestershire, 1839-40*, sessional papers of the House of Lords 1840, volume xxiv p.454
- 24 VCH, p.151
- 25 *The Illustrated Exhibitor: a Tribute to the World's Industrial Jubilee - comprising sketches, by pen and pencil, of the principal objects in the Great Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations, Section XII: Woollen and Worsted*, John Cassell, 1851
- 26 Information from Mrs S Koutsoupas (nee White), Charles White's grand-daughter.
- 27 Trade catalogue for Workman & Sons, c 1895, in the author's possession. The company was of some repute and had been awarded several medals at agricultural shows such as the 1892 Royal Agricultural Society's England Trials.
- 28 Personal recollections and interview with G. Webb of *Gloucester Citizen*, 1987.
- 29 Copy of maps and papers relating to the sale in the author's possession. Auctioneers were George Nichols, Young, Hunt & Co. in conjunction with Davis, Champion & Payne. Lots were spread over the parishes of Wheatenhurst, Eastington and Frampton-on-Severn.



Fromebridge Mill, early 1990s

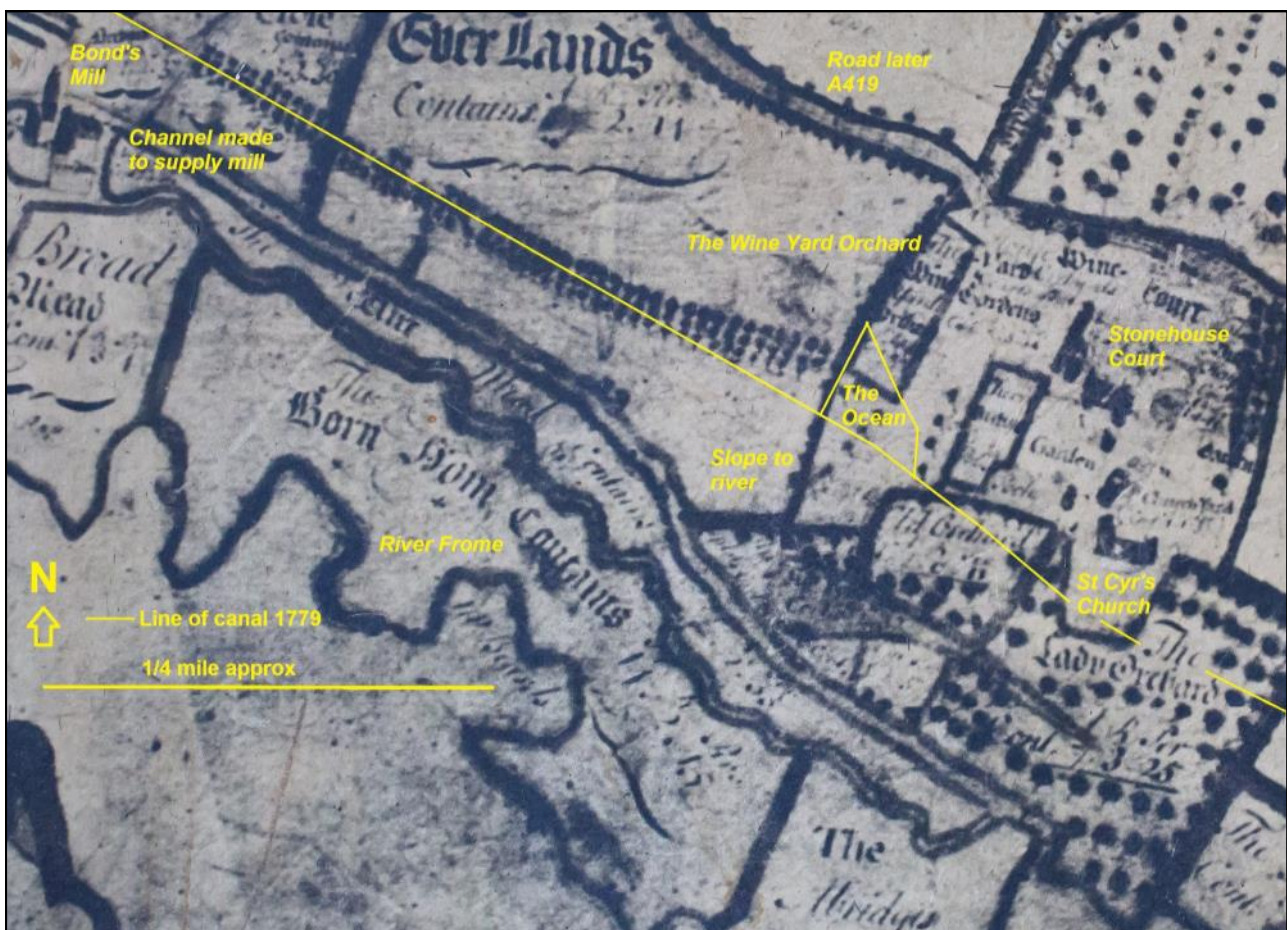
The origin and ownership of Stonehouse Ocean

by Jim Dickson and Cathy Glen

In her book *"The Stroudwater Navigation"*, Joan Tucker wrote that *"the origin of this beautiful stretch of water is obscure but it was probably one of three fishponds which served the ancient manor of Stonehouse at Stonehouse Court."* Joan was the Archives Director of the Company of Proprietors of the Stroudwater Navigation (*"the Company"*) for more than 20 years. We both read her book and thought her comments on the Ocean seemed wholly reasonable. However, in recent years, we have become aware of evidence which demonstrates clearly that the Ocean did not exist until the creation of the Stroudwater Canal (*"the canal"*) in the 1770s. The following records our findings.

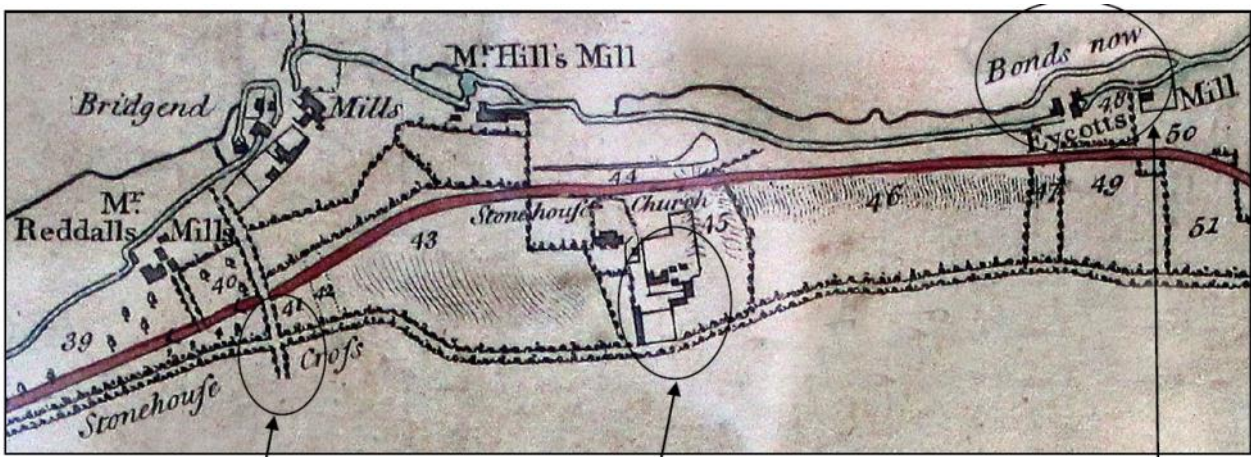
The Levi Ball map

Levi Ball inherited Stonehouse Manor in 1729. Since he lived in London, a large map was created c.1730 by Stephen Jefferys of Minchin Hampton to show him the extent of the property he had inherited. Unfortunately, during a serious fire in the manor house (Stonehouse Court) in 1908, the original map was destroyed. Fortunately, Arthur Winterbotham, the last Lord of the Manor, had a photograph of the map and had had three full-sized copies made, one of which hangs in Stonehouse Court Hotel. Another is in Gloucestershire Archives.

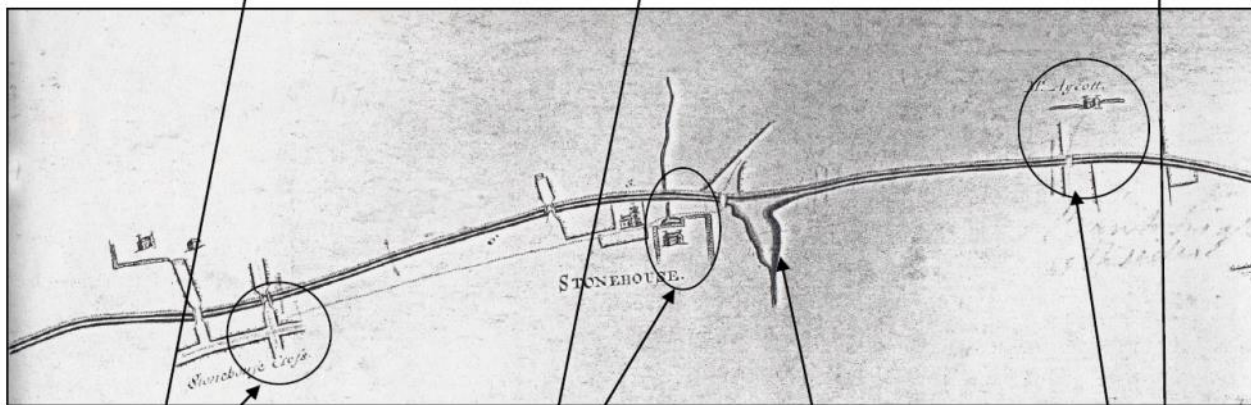


Copy of a portion of "A Map of Y. Manor of Stonehouse In the County of Gloucester Belonging to Levi Ball Esq". Surveyed by Stephen Jefferys of Minchin Hampton, c1730.

The above portion of the map shows no body of water at the location of the Ocean, and neither does the portion of the plan of the proposed canal made c.1775 (see *opposite*).



Portion of a map of the "intended canal" (c.1775)



Portion of a map of the completed canal (1781)

Junction of
Regent Street
& Bristol Road

Stonehouse
Court

Stonehouse
Ocean

Bond's
Mill

This is not surprising since the Ocean and canal were created on a south-facing slope. The Levi Ball map shows an enclosure called the Wine Yard Orchard near the location of the Ocean (this may be the site of the vineyard recorded in the Domesday Book, 1086). The Caudle Stream, which ran down the western side of the Wine Yard Orchard, originally joined the River Frome in the watermeadow to the south of the Ocean. When the canal was constructed, it seems likely that the stream was connected to it since a small inflow of water would have helped to compensate for leakage. Such a junction would have been a useful place to create a winding hole (for turning canal boats and possibly also as a small anchorage for use during construction of the canal). The Ocean is in place on the 1781 plan of the completed canal.

Archives of the Committee of the Company

Since the Ocean appeared to have been created during construction of the canal (1775-79), we examined the minutes of the Company meetings documents in the hope that they might shed some light on the origin of the Ocean. A search soon revealed the following intriguing information:

Company meeting, 6th August 1851

The Committee was "informed that Mr Henry James had been netting the water belonging to this Companycalled the Ocean under the authority, or presumed authority, produced by him from Mr. Nathaniel Marling of Stanley and that he had caught a considerable quantity of fish therein."

The Chairman was *“requested to wait upon Mr. Marling with a plan of the water and property so fished and purchased of Mr. Ball and others and to explain the claim made by this Company to the exclusive possession of the water and land in question.”*

[The Ball family owned Stonehouse Manor from 1690 to 1784. Throughout that period, the house was partly let out together with the Manor farm, with parts reserved for the Lord of the Manor's family to visit.

Mrs Mary Ball inherited the Manor in 1766 following the death of her husband at their home in Painswick. She does not appear to have lived in Stonehouse Court, continuing to live in Painswick. Nevertheless she was opposed to the canal before, during, and after its construction. She died in 1784.

Stonehouse Court was owned by the Marling family from 1847 to 1906.]

Company meeting, 17th September 1851

The Chairman reported that *“he had seen Mr. Marlingwho replied that he would immediately withdraw his claim to the right of fishing the Ocean if the Company would show his solicitor a conveyance of the Land described.”* (i.e. to show that ownership had been transferred to the Canal Company).

Company meeting, 29th October 1851

The Chairman reported that the necessary searches had been carried out and nothing of significance had been found.

How was the ownership issue resolved?

Five years after the dispute about ownership of the Ocean, Nathaniel Samuel Marling was elected a member of the Canal Company at its meeting on 23rd April 1856. One might well suspect that he joined the Company so that he could “keep an eye” on its activities. Surprisingly, he chaired that meeting.

In his first year as a member, Marling attended 9 of the 13 Company meetings and, in the year before his death on 14th January 1861, attended 10 of the 15 Company meetings. So clearly he retained his interest in the Company once he had become a member

The following information is taken from the Company records of its committee meetings:

25th April 1861.

Thomas Marling (brother of Nathaniel) became a member of the Company's Committee.

20th September 1877.

With Thomas Marling present, the Committee recorded that it was *“desirable to ascertain the then-present boundaries of Stonehouse Ocean and to arrange these between the Canal Company and the Trustees of the adjoining Stonehouse Court Estate.”* The boundary matter was to be arranged by the solicitors of the Company and of the Trustees.

11th November 1879.

Thomas Marling died aged 76.

22nd April 1880.

William Henry Marling became a member of the Company's Committee – and he remained a member until his death some 39 years later (1880 to 1919). He was a nephew of Nathaniel Samuel Marling and Thomas Marling.

16th September 1880.

At a meeting of the Company, it was pointed out to William H. Marling that it had been arranged with the late Thomas Marling that the withy trees at the top of the Ocean should mark the extent of the Company's property, and that the Company lop the trees to maintain their right to the land. W. H. Marling expressed his satisfaction with this arrangement.

17th July 1883.

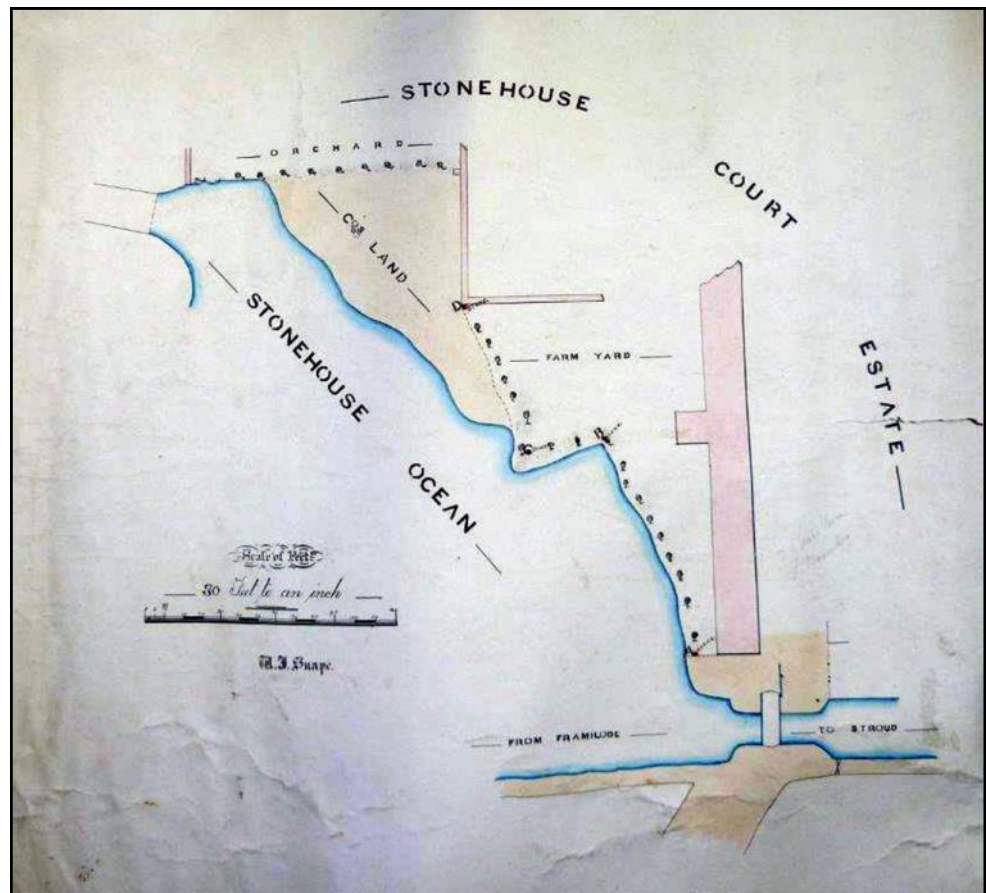
Since the boundaries of Stonehouse Ocean were still undefined, W. H. Marling was asked at a Company meeting to meet Mr Hooper and Mr Stanton with a view to defining these boundaries. W. H. Marling, representing the Trustees of the Stonehouse Court Estate, and Messrs Hooper and Stanton, representing the Canal Company, definitively agreed on the boundaries of Stonehouse Ocean.

19th February 1884.

A plan of the Ocean and its boundaries (**see below**) was submitted to the Company meeting. The plan delineates the positions of withy trees belonging to Stonehouse Court Estate and others belonging to the Company. The meeting resolved that the seal of the Canal Company be affixed to the plan and that the plan be signed by William H. Marling (who had now become Sir William).

So transfer of ownership of the Ocean and surrounding land had been agreed some 33 years after the disagreement over ownership (in autumn 1884) and more than a century after the opening of the Stroudwater Canal (in 1779).

*Plan of the Ocean,
signed and sealed
22nd April 1884.*



Sources of Information

GA = Gloucestershire Archives

Copy of Levi Ball map, c1730, courtesy of Stonehouse Court Hotel, annotated SHG

Canal, plans proposed c1775, GA D1278/P3, built 1781, GA D1180/10/2, with permission

Plan of the Ocean 1884, GA D1180/10/11, with permission and acknowledgement to the Company of Proprietors of the Stroudwater Navigation.

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Ball family and Stonehouse manor : Victoria County History of Gloucestershire, vol. 10, online at <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/glos/vol10/pp273-276>:

Handford, Michael, *The Stroudwater Canal*, Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1979, p.212

Marling family: the Peerage website, <http://www.thepeerage.com/p51113.htm#i511122> Accessed March 2021

Tucker, Joan, *The Stroudwater Navigation*, Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 2003, p.25

James Charles Clegg Kimmins and his family

by Linda Collazo

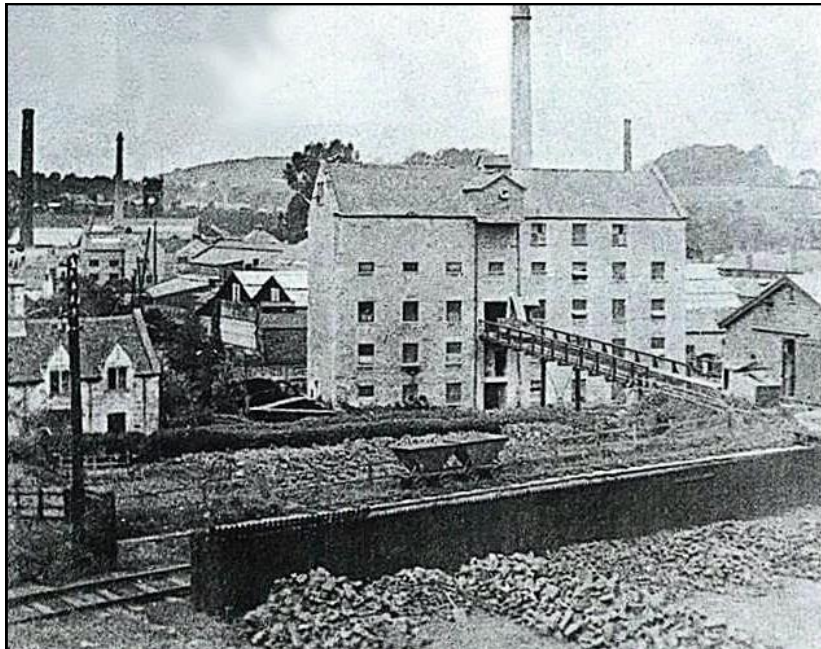
The residents of Stonehouse who enjoy using Laburnum Recreation Ground owe their thanks to James Charles Clegg Kimmins who, in 1919, donated the land to the people of the parish.

James was the third child of nine born in 1851 in Isleworth (near London) to father James, a journeyman miller, and his wife Elizabeth Coster Clegg. James and Elizabeth hailed from Kent where James senior was a bread and biscuit maker. He let out his established baking business in Chatham High Street and moved his family firstly to Isleworth then, around 1855, they settled in Dudbridge Stroud.

At the age of fourteen James followed in his father's footsteps and worked for Ford Brothers at Ryeford learning the business of flour milling. He and his siblings were keen scholars and spent every spare moment studying. They were keen supporters of the newly opened Stonehouse Institute. James Kimmins went on to win a bronze medal and full certificate in organic chemistry at the Bristol Trade & Mining School (later known as Merchant Venturers' School).

His sense of fairness and his scientific knowledge proved invaluable in 1884, when he challenged the County Authority analyst who had accused one of his customers of adulterating a consignment of flour. It came to light that the flour samples had been mixed up. Kimmins used his own solicitor and won the case for his customer.

Kimmins was associated with Downton Flour Mill, Stanley Downton and Friggs Mill, Rodborough, and was a partner in Kimmins Drew & Co. They leased what was known as the Dudbridge New Flour Mill from the Marling family in about 1889 and ran it until its closure in 1931. The building is still in existence and is known as Kimmins Mill. It is situated adjacent to Sainsbury's supermarket in Dudbridge.



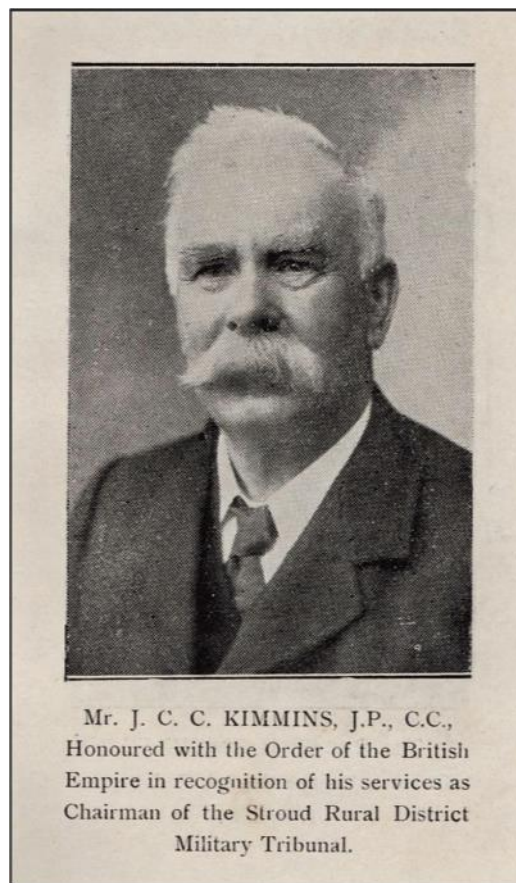
Kimmins Mill c1924

Kimmins devoted much of his life to public service. As early as 1871 he became one of two Overseers of the Poor for the Stonehouse Parish, being responsible for allocating aid to poor people. His keen interest and dedication proved of value when, in October 1914, the whole of Cainscross Parish Council resigned in protest against the County Council's decision to erect a sanatorium for tubercular patients at Cashes Green. Although it was a long time since Kimmins had been a member of Cainscross Parish Council, the County Council made the decision to appoint him to act alone as the Parish Council. He held the record in England for one person acting as a Parish Council, continuing in this role for at least two years.

Kimmins went on to serve on many local and county council committees, invariably ending up as chair. As a representative on the Board of Guardians (*Boards of Guardians were local authorities that administered the Poor Law in the UK from 1835 to 1930*), he fought for the right of the Press to attend the meetings. When this was refused, he informed the Board that he would act as reporter himself and within six months the Press were admitted. In 1889 when the County Councils were established, Kimmins was elected to represent the Stonehouse Division. Then, after the Education Act came into force in 1902, he became Chair of the Education Committee. In 1892 he was appointed a Justice of the Peace.

During the Great War he was Chair of the Stroud Rural District Tribunal. These Tribunals were bodies formed by borough, urban district and rural district councils to hear applications for exemption from conscription into the British Army during the First World War. They played an important part in the process of conscription. The work was arduous and for his contribution James Kimmins was awarded the M.B.E. (not O.B.E. as reported in the adjacent photograph)

He was not the only member of his family to hold a prominent position. His brother Charles William (b.1856) became a Doctor of Science and Chief Inspector of Education for the London County Council.



Mr. J. C. C. KIMMINS, J.P., C.C.,
Honoured with the Order of the British
Empire in recognition of his services as
Chairman of the Stroud Rural District
Military Tribunal.



A. EMILIE KIMMINS,
February, 1920.

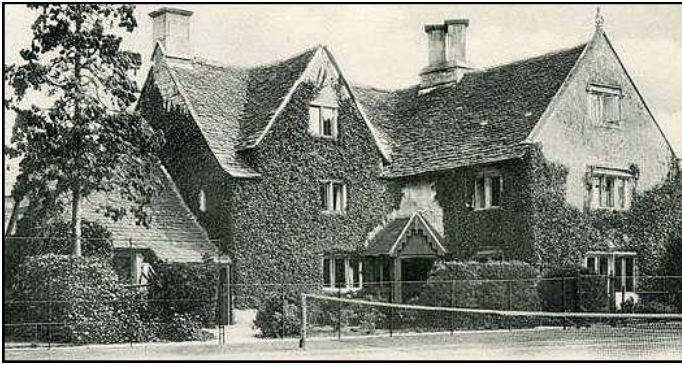
Their sister Alice Emilie (known as Emilie) (b.1854) travelled to India in 1886 as a Missionary of the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission. Moving from Lahore, she arrived in Bombay, where she took charge of the Girgaum Girls' School. She deemed the climate unsuitable for the children of European origin that she taught and moved to Panchgani where she started a boarding school with 15 children. Emilie developed a successful school and added more and more buildings as the school expanded. She was responsible for opening a mission school for the village children and helped develop the Panchgani library and Gymkhana. Emilie returned to England for a rest in January 1921 with the intention of returning to India to continue her work. However, after a short illness, she died on 28th March 1921 at the family home of Ryeford Lodge. The school changed its name in memory of Emilie and is now known as Kimmins High School.

In 1870 James Kimmins, together with his parents and siblings, lived at Ivy Grove, Haywardsend, Stonehouse, now part of Wycliffe College.

On 7th July 1870 an advertisement appeared in the Western Daily Press:

"A lady residing in a healthy village in Gloucestershire wishes to receive two or three Young Ladies to share the benefits of a first class Education with members of her own family. Terms exceedingly moderate – Address E. K. Kimmins, Ivy Grove, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire"

The advertisement indicates that James's mother Elizabeth was a progressive thinker and keen for her children to have a good education. The 1871 census reveals that three of his sisters were school mistresses at Ivy Grove. There were already nine pupils attending aged between 9 and 19 years old. Kimmins was working as a commercial traveller in the flour trade.



Ivy Grove c1900

On 1st April 1872 the family suffered a tragedy when James senior, who was on his way to Ryeford Mill in the early morning, fell into the canal and drowned. It was reported in the Gloucester Chronicle on 6th April that the morning was foggy and as it was so early there was little light. He slipped or stumbled over a rope but there was no one near to assist him. As a result of the details of the inquest reported in the Stroud Journal, a letter appeared in the newspaper from William Foster, an Agent for the Railway Passenger

Assurance Company, complaining of an error in the report. He wanted it known that James Kimmins had been insured with his company against accidents for the sum of £1000.

By May 1873 the school was known as Ivy Grove Young Ladies School and was managed by Kimmins' mother Elizabeth and his sister Frances. The senior school, under his sister Elizabeth (Lizzie), had twenty young ladies aged 13 to 23 years old. The subjects taught were varied. In addition to the standard English, arithmetic, history and geography, there was geology, electricity and magnetism, botany, vegetable and animal physiology and zoology and drawing. The junior department was run by Sarah, another of the sisters, and had twenty five to thirty girls aged between 5 and 13 years old. The school was clearly very successful and growing at a fast rate. An advertisement in the Stroud Journal on 11th July 1874 showed that they had expanded and by now moved to Haywardsfield Hall (later to become Wycliffe College School House). They were proud of the fact that they had "*resident Foreign Governesses and visiting Masters, that the principals endeavoured to combine the advantages of high class education with the comforts and refinements of home*". The terms were deemed to be "*moderate*".

More years of success with pupils obtaining prizes and certificates helped the school's reputation and expansion. By 1881 the school moved again and became known as The Anglo - French Ladies' College at Ebley Court, Stroud and 73 Rue de Bouen, Dieppe, France. The principals continued to be the Misses Kimmins, they had thirty nine boarders from across the country, and three governesses including one French and one Swiss. The same school system was practised in both establishments with lessons being delivered in French at the Dieppe school.



The Kimmins Ladies' School c1890s

In 1885 Ryeford Hall was for sale. The Kimmins sisters bought it and moved the school there.

An advertisement in The Stroud News & Gloucestershire Advertiser on 10th September 1886 announced the move. By now they also had a German governess and could offer outdoor

pursuits, including tennis, alongside a gymnasium. James Kimmins and his wife Isabel and their seven children moved to Ebley Court.



In 1901 Kimmins' mother died. However, the school continued successfully and by 1911 Kimmins and his family had moved to Ryeford Hall to join his sister Frances, now retired. The running of the school was taken over by James and Isabel's daughters, Nellie and Grace, together with four school mistresses.

In an article published in the Gloucester Chronicle in 1923 the writer says, "Mr Kimmins always speaks with great reverence of his mother. She appears to have been a remarkable woman. With a large family her influence was supreme during her life. Long after they had attained years of maturity, Mr Kimmins told us, they brought all their difficulties and troubles to her, trusting in her sound judgement and what they believed to be her unerring wisdom."

James Kimmins' five sons all attended Wycliffe College. According to the Register of Old Wycliffians 1882-1912, Arthur and Howard were farming in South Africa, and Gordon was a mining engineer on the Rand near Johannesburg. Percy became a Chartered Accountant and Edward an engineer, managing the Dudbridge Iron Works.

Alderman James Charles Clegg Kimmins J.P., M.B.E., died on 18th April 1936, aged 85, at his home - Cotswold Grange, Brown's Lane, Stonehouse. He left an estate to the value of £41,686 19s 3d. He had amassed properties and land in and around Stonehouse. His funeral was held at Wycliffe's Methodist Chapel and many tributes were paid to him for his "unabated cheerfulness, his deep Christian courage and his constant concern for the welfare of others."

His grandson, Donald Kimmins, remembered his grandfather with affection (as told to Juliet Shipman c1994).

My grandfather was a quiet, shy man who was a tireless worker for the education of children. He felt the handicap of his own lack of education and it made him determined to see that children, especially from poor families, had a good foundation.

He was an "immensely hard-working man, who gave of his time unsparingly to committees".

He "was such a worker, he had an extremely good head for business affairs. He was very clever and capable. He knew what to invest in. He would go down to the docks at Avonmouth and would buy entire cargoes of grain from South America. He was extraordinarily shrewd. I remember going for walks with him and enjoyed them so much. He liked talking with young people. He was very encouraging – he got me to talk and discovered what my interests were and encouraged me to go ahead with them."



*Kimmins family gravestone in St Cyr's churchyard, remembering JCC Kimmins, his wife Isabel, his son Percy and his daughters Grace and Nellie.
Inset: JCC Kimmins' inscription*

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Funeral report: Gloucestershire Echo, April 22nd, 1936

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Who's Who in Gloucestershire (No 8), Gloucestershire Chronicle, February 24th, 1923

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Shipman, Juliet, *Interview with Donald Kimmins*, c1994

Standish VAD Hospital

by Shirley Dicker

The Voluntary Aid Detachment or VAD system was founded in 1909 with the support of the British Red Cross and the Order of St John's to provide volunteer nurses in times of war. During the First World War the numbers of volunteers, particularly women, grew and the types of jobs diversified to include ambulance driving, catering and administration.

The Red Cross set up many VAD hospitals across the UK with approximately 30 in Gloucestershire, often based in large houses loaned to them by their owners, or set up in public buildings. Standish House, owned at the time by Lord Sherborne, became the VAD Hospital in the Stonehouse district due to the conviction of Mary King that it would provide ideal premises for their needs. Coming from a family of wealthy Bristol ship owners, Mary had lived at Standish during the 1880s and 1890s, her family having rented the premises during that time. She persuaded Lord Sherborne to loan the property to the Red Cross for the war effort and, at the age of 61, she left her home at Newark Park and moved to Standish to live in the former Butler's Room. Mary was instrumental in the establishment and management of the hospital as well as the training of nurses. Known for her kindness and consideration for the patients and nurses alike, she was described as 'self-sacrificing' and was awarded an OBE for her work.

In November 1914 Lord Sherborne offered to update Standish House to make it ready by adding new bathrooms, toilets and electric lights and redecorating the property. On Easter Monday 1915 an Open Day was held, with the public being invited to visit the buildings before the hospital opened with over 700 people attending. A request made in the newspaper for gifts to support its running was generously responded to by members of the community. Theatre equipment was lent by Dr Hoffman. By May 1915, the House had been transformed into a hospital and was equipped and ready for use. It was unusual in that many of the staff lived on the premises.

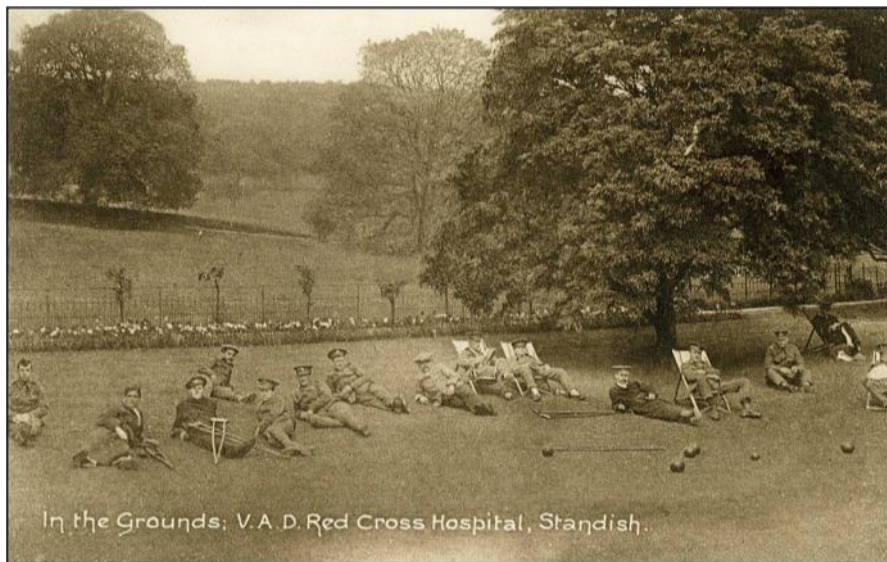
Standish Hospital opened on May 13th 1915, with 100 beds in the main house, staffed by eight fully-trained nursing sisters with the remainder of the staff being local volunteers from the Red Cross detachments, many of whom had been trained by the Commandant, Mary King. The following year saw twenty more beds for open air treatment being added and, later, ten more making 130 in total. The funds for these additions and for other improvements, such as massage and electrical equipment, were given by supportive local residents.



Staff at Standish VAD hospital

Despite months of hard work and preparations the arrival of the first patients came as a surprise as just 2 hours' notice was given that 31 patients, including 14 stretcher cases, would be arriving at Stonehouse station. Transport needed to be arranged and, although it was May, snow was falling, so the groundsmen lit fires in the rooms. This lack of warning meant that they had few provisions in their stores. As that day was early closing for shops in Stonehouse, local people brought what they could from their homes to feed the arrivals. These were the first of almost 2,300 sick and wounded soldiers treated at Standish between 1915 and 1919.

The patients, who came from all over the country to be treated, were subject to military discipline while in hospital. They came from many regiments and included Australian and Canadian troops who had been fighting alongside British forces. While they were at Standish, those who were able to dress themselves had to wear their own uniform, otherwise there was a blue uniform provided. The soldiers were free to leave the hospital during the day but had to be back by 6.30 pm for tea or they would miss the meal. Despite the difficult situation, the patients and nurses did have some good times. Many made friends with the Stonehouse residents, some even found girlfriends and married. The majority of the patients were not too badly wounded, there being only very few recorded deaths. When they were fit and discharged they had ten days' grace before being sent back to the front line.



Standish hospital patients and nurses

Hospital Life

Winifred Bennett became a VAD nurse at Standish at the age of 49. She was one of the sisters of James Kimmins (see page 32). She had gained a teaching qualification in 1892 and, in 1893, was accepted into the London Medical School. We have been unable to find out what medical qualification she gained, but, by 1901, she was a teacher at her mother's school in Ryeford. In 1909 she married George Bennett and lived in Leonard Stanley, but unfortunately he died in 1912 and she moved back to Ryeford Hall.

Winifred wrote an account of her experiences at Standish called *"A Lighter Side of Hospital Life"*.

The following are some edited extracts from her account.

The hospital was laid out over three floors. The ground floor was divided into three large wards; Berkeley, Dursley, and Painswick Wards which accommodated twenty seven patients in total. The soldiers on this floor had the most severe injuries and many were amputees. On the second floor there were eight smaller wards with around 60 beds in total. These catered for soldiers who had less severe injuries or were nearing the end of their time in hospital. Some of these convalescents were transferred to Newark Park (Mary King's family home) which she kindly offered in order to free up beds for more needy soldiers arriving at Standish. The top floor housed the hospital theatre and recovery ward. The attics provided accommodation for some of the resident staff including Mary King, who had the Butler's Room, and the Quartermaster, Miss Ethel Maud Phillimore.



Winifred had very clear memories of Miss Phillimore who *"seemed to be everywhere, day or night"*. She remembered *"she seemed to have eyes in the back of her head"* which was awkward for a nurse doing things she should not! The role of a Quartermaster was to take responsibility for the receipt, custody and issuing of articles from the provisions store, and to help with the daily running of the hospital. Living at Berryfield House, on Bristol Road, with her widowed mother and four siblings, Ethel Maud Phillimore was aged 46 when she became Quartermaster at Standish Hospital. After the war she became a Justice of the Peace at Whitminster Magistrate's Court, and received an MBE in recognition of her contribution to the local community.

The five trained sisters lived in the Coachman's Cottage and the doctors stayed in the Lodge. The five night nurses, whose shifts began at 9pm, slept during the day at the farm at the bottom of the drive some 10 minutes' walk from the hospital. The VADs did not usually sleep on site as most either walked or cycled to the hospital. One woman, Nurse Skinner, walked from Painswick across fields and lanes, meeting up with other nurses on the way to her shift, then walking back at the end of the day.

The volunteers were not only expected to do nursing duties but also to be on a rota to do other duties which included working in the big kitchen scrubbing the pots, washing up, emptying the pig buckets and helping to cook the meals. They helped with washing and ironing, or assisted the Hall Orderly with cleaning and sweeping. They would also have had to scrub and polish floors, clean out grates, light fires and serve meals to the officers.

Their duties as 'Night Runners' included keeping the boilers stoked to provide water for the bathrooms; ensuring that all the dinner and supper dishes were washed and laid out in time for breakfast; laying the kitchen fire and putting on the five huge kettles ready for the morning tea.



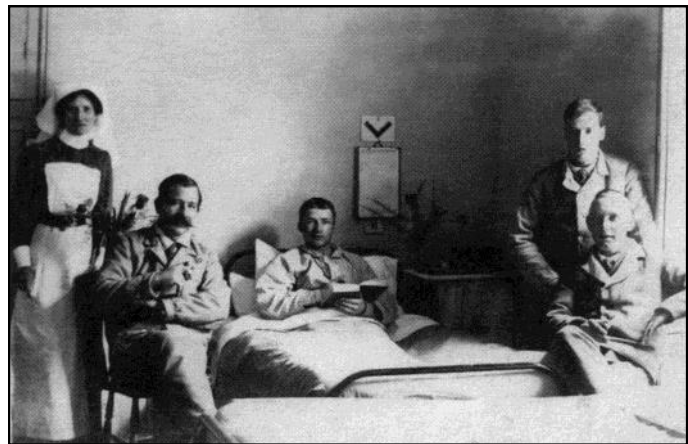
A volunteer scrubbing hospital floors. (Atkinson)

The Orderly was expected to start work at 11.00 am, sweeping and then dusting the stairs and hallways from the attic to the ground floor. When these jobs were finished it was expected that the Orderly would sit in the hall to answer the door and show visitors to the soldiers' rooms. They also had to fill in the book that listed all the gifts given, which seemed to be a variety of fruit and vegetables such as bananas, lettuces, spinach and asparagus (which some people found hard to spell!). Another requirement was selling postcards and stamps, keeping a tally in a book and the money separate.

During their quiet times they were expected to darn socks and mend the clothes, Winifred recalls *"you had to keep busy with jobs like darning. You were given things to do according to your capacity. I was very good at sewing on buttons, but not much more. One soldier asked me to alter his trousers as he was leaving the next day and they were tight. I said I was not good at it. He said if he had the materials he could do it, as he was a tailor. I soon found the items and he made an excellent job."*

Nursing the sick

As well as coping with the wounds of war there were occasions when infectious disease was a problem, particularly amongst groups of people living in close proximity. Winifred remembered that one night she was at home when she had a phone call from the hospital to ask if she could come in and nurse someone with an infectious illness - at that point they did not know whether it was scarlet fever or measles. She collected her bag and cycled in. Sister Moxon gave her the grim news about her patient, warning her she must not leave anything in the room as he had suicidal tendencies. She entered the room and met a young Scottish boy. She put up her carbolic curtain (a sheet soaked in carbolic to keep the germs from escaping) and then made a nice fire with the help of McKay. Winifred recalled in her notes that she saw no signs of what the Sister had said, commenting that they had got on well, playing cards to help pass the time. Food was left outside the room which she transferred to his plates, after which she went to the garden room to eat. Apart from herself and the doctor, no one else was permitted to enter the room despite concern and interest from the other patients. With 130 men at the hospital Winifred and the other nurses struggled to recall their names, so she found it a nice change looking after just one man.



Nurse and patients (Atkinson)

Hospital life was not that restrictive, she recounted, as they enjoyed card games and playing jokes on one another. Visitors were permitted at any reasonable time, some of them incurring lengthy journeys to visit their relatives. When the weather was good the soldiers were encouraged to spend time outside in both summer and winter. Shooting was very popular and targets were set up for them to practise, with one sergeant teaching many of the nurses to shoot and some, he admitted, were very good at it. In winter, tobogganing and snowballing were popular. *"Once when the snow was really deep we all went out tobogganing. It was great fun except one nurse fell off and broke her arm, but otherwise they all had fun."*

Acting was also popular and, led by Mrs Dorothy Farran from Haywardsend, staff and patients put on several plays for the other patients and the nurses. Everyone felt the need to find something to make people laugh.



Tobogganing near Standish (Atkinson)

The soldiers were taken out whenever possible with a duty nurse to escort them. There were regular outings to Winifred's family home at Ryeford Hall for tea and games of whist and bridge.

Sometimes free tickets were sent from the Empire Theatre in Stroud. Getting there entailed a walk to and from the station to catch the train. Once they were given free tickets for thirty four patients to go to the theatre to an entertainment of dancing and singing. Winifred writes - *"I was working on Ward 1 and it was my half day off. I was asked by Matron and the men if I would go. It had been snowing and was very deep. I had lost my shoes and only had thin shoes on with my galoshes being three miles away. The men said they would get them and sure enough off they went and returned with them. Sister Dillon was not happy that I had been asked to go, she made some rude remarks but I pointed out I been given half an hour off to walk to the station. We all set off a like a small army. The men started throwing snowballs at each other but their aim was not good and I got hit by lots of them. We got to the station with 10 minutes to wait so a large snowball fight got underway. The Australians had never seen snow and were really enjoying snowballing. The station master came and asked them to stop but the soldiers said, "Sorry cannot do: you are not in khaki and too young to obey." He was so mad he rang Standish to say they were behaving like beasts, but they never got into trouble. When the rail car came they behaved beautifully but as soon as we got off they started again, till we got to the theatre. We were told we had to catch the 5.30 pm train but the show did not end till 6.30 pm and the men did not want to leave. But after I told them I would get into trouble, they came. It was still snowing on the way back and Soldier Smith said, "If Bennett had not been in charge he would not have left early."*

On Sundays Holy Communion was conducted at the hospital by Canon Nash of Standish Church who was the Hospital Chaplain. The men were free to attend these or alternative religious services held at the Subscription Rooms in Regent Street, Stonehouse. In 1916 a special Memorial service for Lord Kitchener was held at Gloucester Cathedral and a great effort was made to enable all those fit enough to attend the ceremony, with everyone travelling in cars and carriages.

Winifred's memoirs record the Ward Kitchen role as being the hardest in the hospital. Her diary mentions staff like Matron Cicely Burbidge, who showed respect and kindness, as well as those whose attitude was reflective of social class prejudice and intolerance. The nurse who Winifred took over from had lasted in post a mere two weeks, having left to return home to recuperate. Winifred managed a month, working under Sister Dillon who she describes as *"bad tempered and a work horse"*. When she had a week off, to Winifred's relief, Sister Hermione Blackwood took over. Sister Blackwood had experience of working in all departments, so she knew how hard the work was. Winifred felt that Sister Dillon classed all VAD nurses as low class and so to be trodden down, but Sister Blackwood treated them like humans and she treated the patients the same - she was a lovely person.

Winifred also had fond memories of Miss King, the Commandant, particularly when she worked as Night Runner alongside her. One of her jobs was to see that Miss King's room, as well as those of the other sisters, was kept clean and tidy with enough coal for the fires. She noted how Miss King was always appreciative when she took her tea to her. She commented *"I don't think any hospital had a nicer Commandant than we did. She was so kind and considerate to all the patients and nurses."* That was a compliment indeed.



VAD nurses working on the laundry.
(Martin Slinger)

Not only was the work arduous but there were times of danger and staff suffered injury. One night the theatre garments had not been sterilised and Winifred was asked to do it. She recalls hating the job as the chemicals were dangerous with one nurse burning her hand and needing it in a sling for a week. Winifred got a bucket full of sand in case it caught fire. Nurse Grenside said she would do it but when she started, the chemicals burst into flames, taking several buckets of sand to put the flames out -followed by all night to clean the room!

Winifred reveals herself as being thoughtful and considerate of the men in her care. She purchased matches, cigarettes and pipe cleaners and shared these amongst the patients in the wards. She would collect tea and sugar for them on the way in to work on her bicycle and gave up the milk which was meant to be for herself. After the daily visit from the Quartermaster, the Sister let her make tea which she served to three wards a night, thus delivering a little luxury to everyone during the week. She put the tea pot back so no one knew of their treat. When tea and sugar rationing came in she was unable to get tea for them so they saved the tea leaves in a jug and asked her to brew it up again at night. This she did until the Superintendent caught her, saying the men did not need tea at night. Winifred explained, "*the rule was they had to be in by 6.30 or no tea. I often hid plates of bread etc. for them and smuggled it into their rooms.*" The men often said that, when they got back to the trenches, they would remember the hot tea she made for them at Standish. Her kindness was much appreciated, but even so she was fair game for pranks. She recalled on Woodchester Ward one night, she went in and saw they were all fast asleep having drunk all the milk and put the mugs back. She picked up the tray, "*only for all the mugs to be thrown in the air and the men roaring with laughter. They had tied thin string round the handles which they pulled! They begged me not to tell anyone but to ask other nurses to get the mugs which I did and they all fell for the trick!*"

Standish VAD Hospital treated 2292 soldiers from 1915 to 1919. The soldiers said it was like being at home, the best hospital anywhere and they took these fond memories back to the front line.

After the war ended in 1919 many of the Red Cross hospitals were closed. Standish however remained open and functioned as a Tuberculosis and Isolation Hospital, in later years becoming a specialist centre for Orthopaedics, Rheumatology and Respiratory Care within the National Health Service. It closed in 2006.

Sources of information

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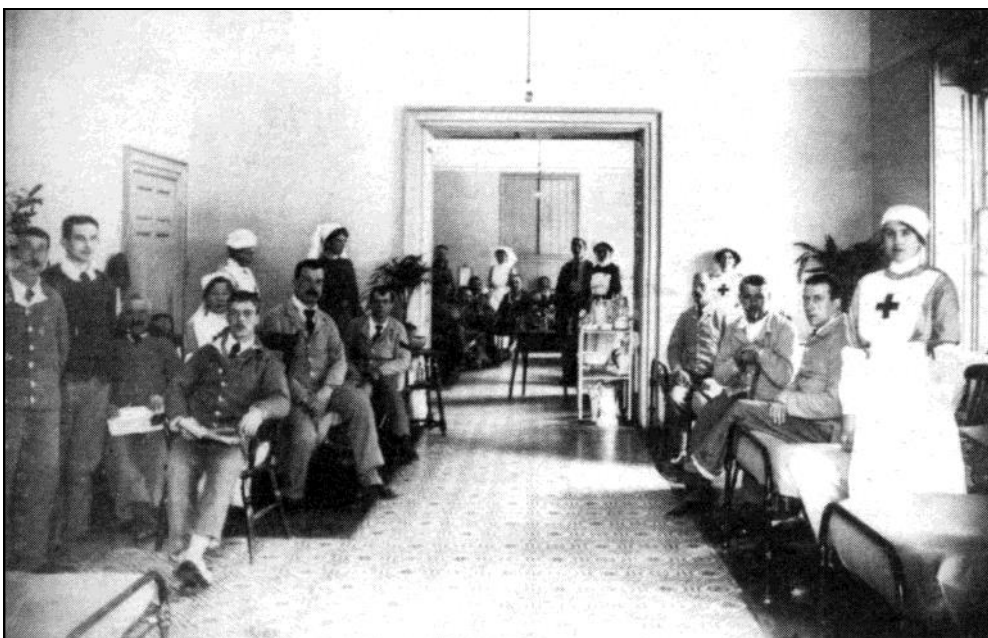
Bennett, Winifred, *A Lighter Side of Hospital Life: an account of her experiences as a VAD nurse at Standish Hospital during WW1*. A copy was given to SHG committee member, Richard White, by Gillian Atkinson.

Gloucestershire Red Cross Hospitals -

<https://www.angelfire.com/az/garethknight/redcross/glosva.html> Accessed March 2021

History of the Red Cross in WW1 - <https://vad.redcross.org.uk/> Accessed March 2021

Photographs from SHG Collection, Atkinson book, Martin Slinger.



Nurses and patients on Dursley and Painswick Wards. (Atkinson)

The Severn Valley Fruit Company (The Jam Factory)

by Vicki Walker

The Smith family moved to Stonehouse in the early 1800s. Frederick Smith set up a grocery and bakery business in the High Street where Broomhall's butcher's shop is now located. By 1861 his nephew Richard had taken over the bakery. It seems that he demolished the original shop and buildings and, in 1877, built the houses and shops that are still on the site. His property extended west behind the street as far as the school.

When Richard Smith retired in 1890, he persuaded his son, Charles Lister Smith, to give up his job as a draper's clerk in London and return to Stonehouse to take over the baking business. Charles saw the potential for creating a new business using the surplus fruit from local orchards. As early as 1903 C.L. Smith is recorded as "*exhibiting specimen jars of Severn Valley Fruits*" at Stonehouse Flower Show and his new company Severn Valley Fruit Company (SVF Co.) was set up in around 1906. The new factory, which made jams and bottled fruit, was located off High Street behind the shops.

Smith was running both businesses side by side. The bakery business retained the name of Richard Smith & Sons long after Richard died in 1901. Arthur Johnson was also a baker in High Street and eventually C.L. Smith sold his bakery to Johnson and concentrated on the SVF Co.

Charles Lister Smith had four children. His eldest son, Herbert had been born in 1886 in London. When the family returned to Stonehouse he attended Wycliffe College from 1897 to 1901 when he joined the Stroud News as an apprentice journalist. In 1906 he gave up his career in journalism to help his father manage the SVF Co.

In 1907 the Gloucester Journal reported under "Local Inventions", a patent applied for by C.L. Smith for "*improvements in closing cans applicable to the preservation of fruits and other foods.*"

Herbert Round Smith served as a gunner in the Royal Garrison Artillery during World War One. He married Marion Armstrong in 1915. After the war he became managing director of Severn Valley Fruits but his father still continued to assist in the business during the 1930s. The firm became a limited company in 1936 and C.L. Smith acted as secretary until his death in 1945. In the 1939 register* Herbert is described as a "*Director of a Fruit Preserving Factory*" and he was also a member of the Observer Corps during WW2. His son Austin was described as a "*jam boiler*" before he became a pilot in the RAF and sadly died in a plane crash in August 1940.

After the war Herbert Round Smith retired from the business and his sons Geoffrey and Thomas took over. Trading became more difficult in the late 50s and early 60s as tastes changed and the motorway system developed bringing more competition. The business needed major investment to modernise and diversify but it wasn't available. Herbert died in 1962 and in 1964 the Company ceased trading, being wound up in 1966.



The Round Smith family c1912.

*Back l to r:
Herbert, Marjorie,
Alan, Gertrude
(known as Mary).*

*Front: Gertrude
Smith (nee Round),
Charles Lister Smith*

Memories of the Jam Factory

From Jeremy Round Smith (son of Geoffrey Round Smith and Stephanie Hart. Grandson of Herbert Round Smith)

As a child growing up in the 1950s I remember the family business of the Jam Factory well - I was even called "*Jerry the Jam*" at school. The factory was very busy at that time and produced bottled and canned fruit and vegetables as well as a range of jams. My father Geoff ran the business and production side while his twin brother Tom was the technical expert researching and supervising recipes, preservatives, and quality control. There was a workforce of perhaps 12 to 15 but during the busy fruit season this would swell to around 40 or so by employing ladies from the village.

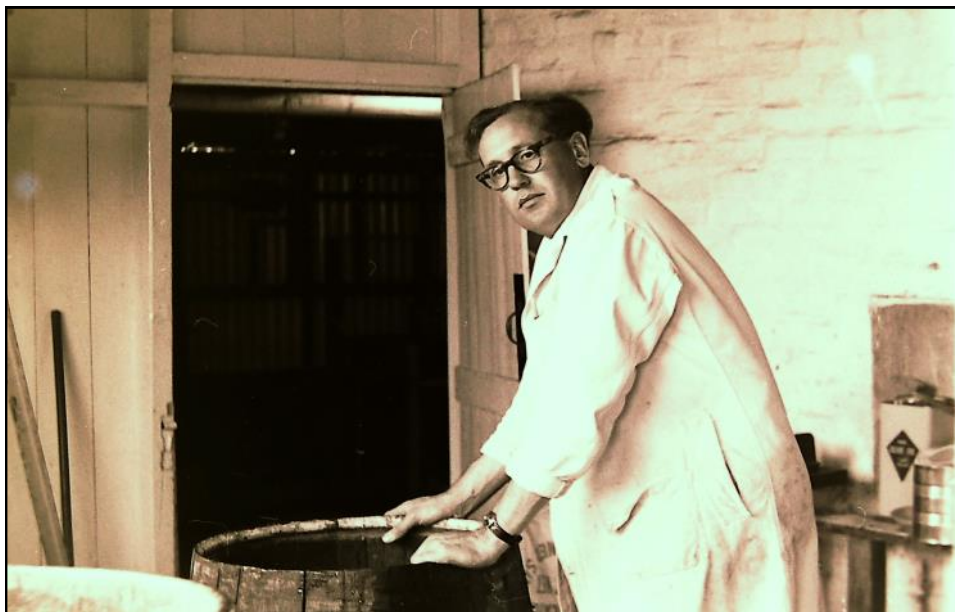
The factory spread over a large site just off the High Street (where Orchard Court is now). I remember being put in the production line after school to keep me out of mischief. I put the paper discs onto the jam in each jar as they went by on a conveyor belt before the machine screwed the lids on. All around us in this sweet, heady aroma of warm raspberry or blackberry jam would be hundreds of wasps, despite the numerous electric zappers. Even today I have a bit of a phobia about them!

Next door was a preparation room with rows of machines operated by the ladies, apple peelers and corers, shredders and dicers, with a deep sump for waste set in the floor, full of peelings and a soupy mess, which naturally I managed to fall into. Beyond that was a vast gloomy warehouse with row upon row of large galvanised water tanks into which were lowered crates of newly canned tins to cool off after steaming. My father would often go back to the factory in the evenings to hoist them out with the overhead gantry. At that age I thought it rather a sinister place.

One room had a large anthracite furnace operated by Wilf Underwood, and it was possible for a small child to squeeze all the way round the back of this monster in the warm dry air. Then there was a loading bay, ramps, and an open yard where there stood rows of wooden barrels full of fruit pulp, great for running along the top of until one day I put my foot through a rotten barrel!

At the rear of the yard were two big Nissen huts for warehousing. The production was mainly for wholesale to commercial customers and sometimes I went in one of the vans on delivery. Frenchay Hospital was one I remember, and my father would also take me on trips to Worcester and Evesham, to the fruit growers to select orders. At home there would be ripe fruit everywhere in the season, to a point where I became thoroughly sick of the sight of cherries, pears, apples and plums, given to me to take to school every day.

I was 12 when the family decided to close the factory in 1964 and sell the site. I have many happy memories of growing up in the village surrounded by such lovely countryside.



Geoffrey Round Smith at the factory c1950s

From John McCallum (son of Margaret Joan “Bobbie” Round Smith and Ian McCallum. Grandson of Herbert Round Smith.)

The company had hit hard times in the early 1930s in the Depression and a majority shareholding was taken by Cheltenham Dairies with my Grandfather, Herbert, as Managing Director. After the war he was joined in the business by his twin sons, Tom and Geoff.

The SVF Co. produced both canned fruit and jams, mainly for wholesale with large quantities going to the NHS and schools. Much of the remaining stock was sold through H. H. and S. Budgett, a large Bristol wholesale company. The cans came from the Metal Box Co. The fruit mainly came from growers in the Vale of Evesham, though I do remember going to Kent to pick fruit up with my Uncle Geoff more than once.



*Geoffrey Round Smith
with Dennis the driver c1956*

I used to spend a lot of time there as a child and worked there in the summer holidays for three years after I was 14; the last year helping my Uncle Geoff clear the premises ready for sale - that was sad. I broke up hundreds of wooden barrels. A lot of fruit used to be stored in them, with sulphur used as a preservative. I can still remember the smell! The wasps used to be dreadful; you were stung continually, despite the devices meant to zap them! During the summer, when most of the canning was done, the factory employed a lot of female temporary workers. It was noisy, steamy work with “*Music while you work*” blaring out over the radio loudspeakers. My very first pay packet was a brown envelope from the factory with 15/- in it!

I have very clear memories of some of the long-serving permanent staff: Winnie Elliott who ran the office single-handed; Kathleen Hillman who did the labelling and a million other jobs; Dennis the driver - I spent many hours on the road with him when I was young (it was a way of occupying me during the school holidays!); Wilf Underwood - a lovely old fellow who again did all sorts; lighting the steam boiler early in the morning, making the syrup in huge vats and he made the strongest homemade wine I have ever tasted. He was a real countryman and lived in the end bungalow on Orchard Place, just up the entry road.



L to r: Wilf Underwood, Winnie Elliott, Dennis the driver, Kath Hillman, Jack Lansbury.



It all seems a very long time ago now but I do remember very happy memories of the SVF Co. as a child; it wasn't just a place of work but a way of life.

I also remember lots of children bringing in blackberries. They used to be paid sixpence a punnet!

Here are some comments from the Stonehouse History Group Facebook page from local people who remember picking fruit for the factory. Most agree they got about 3d per pound or 6d per punnet which was about 2lb.

Audrey Ricks Generations of Stonehouse children earned money during the summer holidays by gathering blackberries and taking them to the factory. We got 6d a punnet for them in the 50s.

Tommy Price We used to pick blackberries and rose hips and take them to the jam factory for about 3 old pennies a pound.

Roger Sanders Brilliant! We used to go blackberry picking and take them to the jam factory.

Bryan Billau My brothers and I would collect blackberries and take them there when we were kids. We never bought jam from there, of course, because our mums would make loads of it at home, along with chutney and pickled onions.

Ray and Mary Barr Remember picking blackberries and taking them down to the jam factory.

John Parker I had a summer holiday job there in the 50s working for the Smith brothers who lived at the top of Verney Road. I recall drinking a lot of the fruit juice from the vats. There was a lady working there called Betty, who was a real character, and kept us well entertained.

Julie Baker Spent many happy hours up at Doverow and Cotswold Green picking blackberries, then taking them to jam factory. Happy days!



Some photos of local children with their blackberries, taken by Tom Smith in the late 50s or early 60s. Unfortunately we have been unable to name any of the children pictured.



Sources of Information

Severn Valley Fruits: newspaper articles accessed via Find My Past www.findmypast.co.uk

Smith family archive: photos and information provided by Tom Round Smith, John McCallum and Jeremy Round Smith

Smith family history: ancestry.co.uk *The 1939 England and Wales Register was similar to a census, taken at the start of World War Two to record people's details for National Identity Cards.

Stonehouse History Group Facebook page:

https://www.facebook.com/stonehousehistorygroup?ref=aymt_homepage_panel

Stonehouse History Group

Report May 2019 – April 2021

Our membership numbers remained steady in 2019-20. Sadly, two of our members died during the year: Valerie Blick, who was a committee member from 2011 to 2018, and who sponsored our first information board, and Peter Griffin, who was a member of our Group from its inauguration in 2008 and gave us several talks. In 2021, Myra Peters, one of our founder members, passed away as did our oldest member, Philip Walmsley.

During 2019-20 we held 10 events, with an average attendance of 50. Then, in April 2020, our programme was affected dramatically due to the introduction of national restrictions associated with the coronavirus pandemic. All our forthcoming events were cancelled, as were many other local history activities which had been planned for the year. As a result we decided not to charge a membership subscription for the 2020-21 season, nor to produce a calendar for 2021. From September 2021 we have offered a programme of monthly meetings via Zoom.

In 2020, we worked with the Stonehouse in Bloom group to create an information board for the redesigned Old Chapel Garden on the site of the former Congregational Churchyard. We received a generous donation from Stonehouse resident Viv Warren towards the new board, and also sponsorship from the Midcounties Co-operative Community Fund. We are grateful to the Cotswold Printing Co. for sponsoring a new board to be placed between the entrances to the Park Schools. A leaflet has been created to show the location of all our boards around the town, with a map designed by Rich White. We have assisted with historical information for other local projects, including the forthcoming installation of the new railway bridge over the canal by the Ocean.

Jim Dickson arranged to have the 18th century milestone on Bristol Road re-erected close to its original position, but safely away from traffic, on the grass verge at the eastern end of the cul de sac. SHG has arranged for a replacement of the original plate on the front of the stone, which was lost some time ago. We are very grateful to Knights Brown Construction Ltd, and its Site Manager, Alex Souden, for their help in moving the stone and sponsoring the cost of the new plate.

We have been unable to give local walks and talks since taking part in the Stonehouse Walking Festival in September 2019. We hope to resume them when national restrictions permit.

We have joined with other local history groups in the Stroud area as part of the Five Valleys Local History Association. Unfortunately our joint events had to be postponed but we hope they will be rearranged in the future. The Gloucestershire Local History Association's Local History (LH) Day also had to be postponed but we have prepared a display on "*The History of Adult Education in Stonehouse*" which will be shown at the next LH Day.

We have continued with research into different aspects of our town's history. We have received donations of photographs from Diane King, Mattie Ross, Park Junior School, Brian Humphries and David Thew. Stonehouse Town Council has loaned us several boxes of historic documents and photos which they have been sorting during the refurbishment of the Town Hall. We are in the process of scanning these and will be able to use them in future articles and displays.

Shirley Dicker has continued to manage the SHG Facebook site which generates many interesting comments and photographs. We have added information to the SHG website and hope to continue to add more as time allows. We have done our best to answer a variety of enquiries about different aspects of Stonehouse history.

The bank balance has remained steady during a period where we have had little income or expenditure.

Committee, May 2019 - April 2021

Chair - Jim Dickson

Vice-Chair and Facebook manager - Shirley Dicker

Secretary and Website manager - Vicki Walker

Treasurer - Andrew Walker

Committee - David Bowker-Praed, Linda Collazo (from May 2020), Jane Gulliford, Janet Hudson, Richard White, Colin Wood (stood down April 2020).

Stonehouse History Group
Events 2019 - 2021 (attendance in brackets)

May 8th 2019 (58) AGM. Liz Davenport – “*The history of Woodchester Mansion.*”

June 12th (54) Geoff North – “*Gloucestershire’s VA hospitals.*”

July 10th (52) Virginia and David Adsett – “*The Fab 50s.*”

August 14th (22) Visit to Woodchester Mansion.

Sept 11th (53) **Show and Tell** - Thanks again to our members for their varied talks:
Cresby Brown - “*Cure Bottes*”. Janet Hudson - *A 19th century sailor’s journal*. Paul Dicker – *P.C. Ken Dicker*. Eric Winder - *Mr Punch and the Italian connection*. Bob Lusty - *My Dad (Cliff Lusty) in Art and Gardening*. Vicki Walker - *Leslie Arrowsmith*.

Oct 9th (27) Jane Bradly – “*Let us be sweethearts: letters from the First World War.*”

Nov 13th (58) Dr Steven Blake - “*Gloucestershire’s Medieval Churches.*”

Dec 11th (54) Jonathan Briggs – “*Mistletoe.*”

Jan 8th 2020 (48) Steve Mills - “*The Adaptive Re-use of Stroud’s cloth mills.*”

Feb 12th (57) John Bromley - “*The Joys of Metal Detecting.*”

March 11th (34) Dr Gillian White “*The history of the Teddy Bear*”

April 8th Event cancelled because of the coronavirus “lockdown”

May 13th AGM via website and email (no figures available)

Following talks via Zoom

An average of 50 “participants” registered for these talks. Some of these include two people. Some of the talks were recorded and made available via our website.

Sept 9th John Parker - “*The history and importance of trees in Stonehouse.*”

Oct 9th Vicki Walker – “*Some history of the pubs in Stonehouse.*”

Nov 30th Val Kirby - “*Landscapes of Wool and Water.*”

Dec 14th Short talks and Quiz

Jim Dickson - *The origin of the Ocean*. Steve Mills - *A strange journey from the Bristol Channel to Eastington*. Janet Hudson - *Graft and Craft – Some beautiful objects crafted from wood*.
Stonehouse Picture Quiz

Jan 25th 2021 Short talks and Quiz

Nick Peters - *The First Ironworker in America*. Shirley Dicker - *Sir Henry Winston of Standish Court*. Vicki Walker - *The History of the Post Office in Stonehouse*.
Stonehouse Picture Quiz Part Two

Feb 10th Short talks and Quiz

John Peters - *A Day in History (WW2 in Tetbury)*. Jim Dickson – *Pillboxes along the Stroudwater canal in Stonehouse*
Stonehouse Quiz

March 10th John Peters - “*Six Stages of Separation.*”
Stonehouse Quiz

April 14th Pauline Stevens - “*The Misses Kimmins’ School.*”
Vicki Walker and Shirley Dicker - “*Standish VAD nurses*”

